



THE TRUE STORY OF THE RUSSIAN REVOLUTION  
AND THE BUILDING OF SOCIALISM

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# From Literacy Classes to Higher Education





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**"We are poor and uneducated. But that does not matter so long as our people realize that they must learn, and so long as they are willing to learn;... This knowledge and desire exist. And so we definitely shall start learning, and shall certainly learn something."**

**Vladimir Lenin, 1922**



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This pamphlet deals with events, most of which took place several decades ago and which are known in history as the cultural revolution in Soviet Russia. Their record is not covered in archival dust: today they are relevant to many developing countries confronted with almost the same problems which faced the world's first workers' and peasants' state after the Great October Socialist Revolution of 1917—elimination of illiteracy, training of specialists, and development of science, to name but a few.

Our generation, born in the late 1920s, remembers how the cultural revolution was taking place in this country, how parents learned to read and write together with their children, how new schools and colleges were opened, how the first Soviet films appeared and art exhibitions were organized for the working people.

Within a historically short space of time, less than two decades, cultural transformations had turned illiterate Russia into one of the most highly developed countries in the world.

# To catch up with the other nations

## The Russian miracle

“On April 12, 1961, the Soviet Union put into orbit the world’s first manned spaceship *Vostok*.” Such were the words of the TASS report on the now historical morning in April.

Radio stations all over the world interrupted their programmes to inform their listeners of the news. Newspapers were hastily recomposed. The teletype and telegraph worked uninterruptedly. The world celebrated and commented on the great news, asking: “Why was Russia the first? The country which Western propaganda has been depicting for decades as a country of illiterate peasants and backward technology?”

This question had to be answered because, as the American columnist Rogers Jr. noted, “one cannot get away from the obvious fact that the Soviet Union has already won this competition”.

The British newspaper *Yorkshire Post* wrote in those days that Russia’s transformation within the lifetime of one generation from a country of illiterate peasants and literate dreamers into a leading,



scientifically advanced power should be regarded as one of the most amazing facts of history.

The *Ghana Evening News* called the first manned space flight a testimony of the might and effectiveness of socialism.

La Pira, the Christian-Democrat Mayor of Florence, a prominent Italian public figure, spoke more definitely:

"This great fact shows that a new civilization is developing on earth based on peace, progress, and a spiritual uplift in mankind's life."

On the day when the first man from earth made a space flight Professor Hermann Oberth<sup>1</sup> gave an interview in Bonn to a *Pravda* correspondent.

"I am very glad," he said, "that my predictions on the possibility of flights into outer space have been confirmed. I made such a prediction back in 1923."

"But did you suppose then," the journalist asked, "that the first spaceman would be a Russian?"

"No, I did not. I thought that it would be a German."

"When did you come to believe that it would be a Soviet man?"

"On October 4, 1957, when the Soviet Union orbited the first man-made earth satellite..."

As a specialist, Oberth was certainly well aware of the complexity of problems involved in space flights. His statement is remarkable, however, because he precisely pointed out the year which marked a turning point in the attitude of many people in the West to the Soviet Union's scientific, technical and cultural achievements.

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<sup>1</sup> West German scientist, one of the pioneers in rocketry, who took part in the creation of the first American artificial earth satellite and of a number of missiles.



*In April 1961 the world press widely commented on Yuri Gagarin's space flight pioneering the manned exploration of outer space. This first orbital flight was the logical consequence of profound transformations in culture, science and technology which started in Russia after the October Revolution of 1917.*

The Soviet Union was then only preparing to mark the 40th anniversary of the proletarian revolution of October 25 (November 7), 1917<sup>1</sup>, which had handed power in one of the largest empires of the world to workers and peasants. In a historically short space of time they turned backward, almost illiterate Russia into an advanced industrial power. Both the launching of the first satellite and Yuri Gagarin's space flight were often called "the Russian miracle" in the Western press. Indeed these events would have been miracles had it not

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<sup>1</sup> All dates referring to events that took place before February 1918 are given according to the calendar used in Russia before the revolution, which was 13 days behind the European calendar. The dates of the European calendar are given in brackets.

been for the sweeping social, economic and cultural changes initiated by the revolution.

These changes put an end to the exploitation of man by man and established public ownership of the basic means of production, such as land, its mineral wealth, factories and mills, instruments of labour, etc., eliminating the actual inequality of the different classes, social strata and numerous nations, large and small, living in the country and demonstrating the possibilities which open up for a society which puts all the riches of its progressive culture in the service of reason, progress and peace.

Oberth's prediction, four years before Gagarin's flight, that a Russian would be the first in outer space, is also a recognition of the effectiveness of the Soviet way of solving social, economic and cultural problems.

The objection may be raised that we interpret the Bonn Professor's words too broadly. But in April 1961 almost everyone assessed the Soviet Union's space success in this way. Both those who can on no account be suspected of a desire to overestimate the significance of that event, and those who, like Oberth, understood what great economic and cultural potential was needed to make a manned space flight possible.

People tried to understand the so-called Russian miracle. They wanted to explain it. It was seen as a concentrated expression of the achievements of Soviet society.

**Continuation  
of the political  
revolution**

The crucial question of any revolution is the question of power. But what mainly distinguishes a socialist revolution from all others is that it is not reduced to this question. Each of the previous revolutions had merely established

the domination of a new class, and replaced one system of exploitation by another without touching their foundations. The main objectives of a socialist revolution are the establishment of the power of the working people and the transformation of society on fundamentally new principles, putting an end to the exploitation of man by man in any form.

For centuries had people dreamed of equality and justice, of a society of brotherhood and reason. Al-Farabi and Nizami in the Middle East, Mo Ti and Shang Yang in medieval China, Thomas More, the English humanist of the late 15th and early 16th centuries, the Italian thinker and poet Tommaso Campanella, the French socialist Saint-Simon and his fellow-countryman Charles Fourier, the Englishman Robert Owen—these and many other outstanding thinkers tried to draw a picture of life where the equal right of all people to freedom and the enjoyment of the good things of life would be established. But none of them could explain why exploitation existed and what laws governed society's development.

Socialism was a dream. And for a long time it was regarded as Utopia, the name invented by Thomas More for his imaginary island of universal equality. Since no such island existed and, naturally, none could appear at that time, the word "Utopia" gradually became synonymous with the notion "vain dream". But people continued to believe that a society of universal equality and justice could be built on earth. To make this dream a reality, clear-cut scientifically founded answers had to be found to questions posed by the very course of mankind's historical development.

Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels, 19th-century German philosophers, were the first who not only

explained the world as it existed then, but indicated ways and means of refashioning it. They discovered the laws of social development and showed that class struggle was its mainspring.

Marx and Engels saw the working class as an independent and determining political force. It was precisely the workers, who had nothing to lose but their chains in the struggle for freedom and who could rouse the toiling peasantry and, abolishing the exploitative system, destroy the foundations of social inequality and prepare conditions for creating a society free of exploitation, a society fair for all.

The ideas of Marx and Engels were further developed in theory and practice by the founder of a workers' party in Russia, Vladimir Ulyanov (Lenin). He creatively substantiated and deepened the revolutionary theory of the working class which has since been justly called Marxism-Leninism. The 1917 Revolution in Russia was a triumph of this theory.

Having taken power into their hands and destroyed the economic foundations of inequality, the working class of Russia, acting in alliance with the poorest peasantry, took the first step towards the practical building of a society without exploitation. October 1917 opened up the possibility of making Thomas More's dream a reality.

But conditions had to be created in which every member of society could consciously, to the extent of his strength and abilities, take part in the building of a new life.

This could not be achieved without abolishing the cultural monopoly of the propertied classes and eliminating the age-old illiteracy of the masses. It was necessary to make the riches of culture a possession of the whole people, to close the cultural

gap between the social strata, between the numerous nationalities of Russia, between town and country, to put an end to the unequal position of women in society, to organize a new life-style, and to do much else.

It was necessary, while smashing and casting away everything that was reactionary, bigoted and antiquated in the culture of the past and the present, to preserve for the society of working people everything valuable that had been accumulated by mankind throughout its history. Only after assimilating the progressive cultural heritage, creatively and critically developing the finest specimens of the spiritual achievements of world civilization, was it possible to create a culture worthy of a just society. In their scope and aims the transformations which took place in Russia in the cultural field after the victory of the working class proved to be a veritable revolution. Hence the definition—"cultural revolution".

**"It requires  
a longer period"**

Historical experience shows that the cultural revolution is a process much longer and much more complex than transformations in the political and economic fields. As Lenin pointed out, cultural development by its very nature "requires a longer period".

The Soviet government gave top priority to democratization of culture and to making it a common possession. A system of public education accessible to all was established. The process of winning over and re-educating members of the bourgeois intelligentsia and the nobility was under way. A new, workers' and peasants' intelligentsia was formed. Literature, science and the arts continued to develop.

Some of the tasks in this period stemmed from the peculiarities of the Russian revolution, for Russia had to do, as Lenin put it, "a vast amount of urgent spade-work" in order to reach a certain level of cultural development which did not exist in the country in 1917.

The backwardness of the masses of people and the illiteracy of the majority of the population were pointed out by many as proof of the impossibility of building socialism in Russia. There was even a theory of "cultural maturity" whose exponents contended that a certain level of culture was needed to start building a new society. True, nobody could say exactly what this level should be. It differed greatly from one European state to another.

In his polemics with the supporters of this theory, Lenin asked: "...why cannot we begin by first achieving the prerequisites for that definite level of culture in a revolutionary way, and *then*, with the aid of the workers' and peasants' government and the Soviet system, proceed to overtake the other nations?"

Precisely this was done. The workers and peasants of Russia began to overtake other nations in the sense of attaining the level of an ordinary civilized state of Western Europe. From the very beginning this work was seen as part of the overall, main task of creating the culture of the working people.

The first steps taken to raise Russia's cultural level are not ones which need necessarily be followed. Back in 1923, Lenin perspicaciously predicted that revolutionary transformations in other countries may yield much more that will be new and unprecedented than the revolution in Russia.







*1918. Vladimir Lenin in his study in the Kremlin. During this time the founder and leader of the Soviet state was elaborating the program of cultural revolution as an indispensable component of the successful building of socialism in the country.*

“Our European philistines never dream,” he wrote, “that the subsequent revolutions in Oriental countries, which possess much vaster populations and a much vaster diversity of social conditions, will undoubtedly display even greater distinctions than the Russian revolution.”

Historical development confirms that problems of cultural development to be urgently dealt with after a successful socialist revolution do not have to be the same as those which confronted the Russian proletariat. Not every country needs to expend as much effort in achieving an elementary level of civilization. But the substance and orientation of the initial tasks of the cultural revolution will always be the same, for the proletariat constitutes

the class basis of any state accomplishing the transition from capitalism to socialism.

The purpose of all urgent cultural transformations of a proletarian state is to free the working people from spiritual bondage and ignorance and to introduce them to the cultural riches accumulated by world civilization.

**In the fight  
for peace**

The October Revolution took place at a time when the flames of the First World War unleashed by imperialism were raging throughout the world. The war substantially helped in the victory of the revolution but at the same time made it difficult to consolidate it. The masses of people in all countries demanded an end to the slaughter. The working people of Russia also strove for peace, without which they could not begin the construction of a new society and accomplish the tasks of cultural development.

In its first decree, the Decree on Peace, the Soviet government condemned war as "the greatest of crimes against humanity" and solemnly declared its determination immediately to conclude peace on just conditions for all peoples, without annexations and indemnities.

The Soviet government also initiated the development of extensive international ties in the sphere of culture. As much attention was paid to cultural as to economic cooperation. This reflected the main objective of the Soviet Republic's foreign policy: the attainment of durable peace. Continuing the war was seen as a blind motion towards the end of European culture.

The Soviet state's struggle to establish and strengthen international economic and cultural ties actively asserted at the same time new standards

and principles of interstate relations in world politics: the free development of all nations and peoples and their peaceful coexistence on the basis of respect for sovereignty, equality, non-interference in each other's internal affairs, and mutually advantageous, many-sided cooperation.

These new principles reflected the vital interests of the victorious Russian proletariat. They accorded also with the aspirations of the peoples of other countries. That is why, as early as in the second half of November 1917, the Norwegian Labour Party submitted the proposal to the Nobel Prize Committee to award the peace prize for 1917 to the Chairman of the Council of People's Commissars, Vladimir Lenin.

It was noted in the proposal that up to that time Lenin had done more than anyone else to bring about the triumph of the idea of peace, and that he not only advocated peace with all his strength, but was taking measures to achieve it.

The head of the Soviet government was also proposed for the peace prize by the professors of the philosophy faculty of Istanbul University, who declared that "Mr. Lenin is the first and most deserving proponent of the policy of peace".

The proposal to award the peace prize for 1917 to Lenin was rejected by the Nobel Prize Committee on the pretext of its late submission: only those proposals which had arrived before February 1917 were to be examined. Yet it was pointed out in the Committee's decision that if the existing Russian government succeeded in establishing peace and tranquility in the country, the Committee would have nothing against awarding the peace prize to Lenin the following year.

But 1918, like the two subsequent years, were years of gruelling armed struggle against the in-

ternal counter-revolution supported by the leading bourgeois states of Europe, the United States and Japan. Their direct military intervention did tremendous damage to the country's cultural development. But the development of the new society could not be stopped either by bayonets or by acts of subversion.

# In the interests of workers and peasants

## **Protection of the people's property**

In November and December 1917, when European and American newspapers, convinced of the imminent demise of Soviet power, argued only about the date of its fall, the young workers' and peasants' state was undertaking the first steps to protect its cultural monuments. Some Western political observers regarded this as a bluff, others, as an absurdity. It was beyond their comprehension that in those days of hardship and economic dislocation, the foundations of a new culture were being laid.

The Soviet government proclaimed the rescue and protection of works of artistic and historical value a matter of paramount importance. On November 3 (16), 1917, a message, "Protect people's property!", was issued which called on workers, peasants, soldiers and sailors to protect the cultural riches of Russia.

"...The working people are now becoming full masters of their country," was stated in the message. "It has become impoverished. It has been ruined by war. But this is only for the time being—the

country possesses inexhaustible possibilities. It has great natural wealth, and given there is a correctly managed economy serving the common interest, the peoples of Russia will prosper.

"In addition to natural riches, the working people have inherited vast cultural riches: buildings of exceptional beauty, museums full of rare and beautiful objects, instructive and ennobling to the soul, libraries preserving the vast heritage of the human intellect, etc.

"All this today truly belongs to the people.

"All this will help the pauper and his children rapidly to surpass the former ruling classes in education, to become a new man, the possessor of the old culture and the creator of a new one without parallel.

"Comrades, property of the people must be vigilantly protected!"

From the very first days the workers' and peasants' government placed the most important art and book collections under its protection to prevent their destruction and plunder. Government commissars and guards from among the soldiers of revolutionary regiments and detachments of the workers' Red Guard were dispatched to the Hermitage Museum, the largest art, cultural and historical museum of Russia, the Winter Palace, the main residence of the Russian emperors, the Taurida Palace, a monument of Russian classicism, the Petrograd<sup>1</sup> public library, the country's largest book depository, and the former out-of-town residences of the tsar.

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<sup>1</sup> Until 1924 Leningrad was called Petrograd and until the beginning of the First World War in 1914, St. Petersburg, in honour of Tsar Peter I who founded it in 1703.



*The cultural revolution that got under way in the country rested on the spiritual foundations created by the preceding generations. The Party and State took all measures to preserve artistic and historical monuments in the process of the revolutionary break-up of the old society. Photo shows one of the first post-revolutionary posters: "Citizens, protect monuments of art."*



In November 1917, on Lenin's initiative, a special Board for the Affairs of Museums and the Protection of Artistic and Historical Monuments was set up. The participation of prominent figures in culture and the sciences was secured. Among them were the artist and art critic Igor Grabar; Academician Nikolai Marr, a foremost Orientalist; and Iosif Orbelli, Professor of Petrograd University and later an Academician and the director of the Hermitage.

In the course of the changes initiated by the revolution the working people's hatred for their former exploiters grew as the latter tried to restore the old order by armed force. Not infrequently this hatred extended to works of artistic and cultural value which had belonged only to the rich before the revolution. The destruction was particularly great in the countryside, where the contrast between the peasants' poverty and ignorance and the refined

culture of the nobility was particularly striking. Acts of destruction started after the overthrow of the monarchy in February (March) 1917. The Provisional Government,<sup>1</sup> preoccupied with preventing the transition of power to the workers, could not cope with the spontaneous expression of the people's wrath. It was in this period that many ancestral estates belonging to the Russian nobility were ransacked and burned down.

After the revolution the responsibility for the protection of cultural monuments was placed on the bodies of people's power, the Soviets. Already in December 1917 Lenin pointed out in a telegram to the chairman of a local Soviet: "You are responsible for their safe-keeping. The estates are the property of the people. Prosecute for looting. Inform us of the sentences of the court".

The struggle of state bodies against plunder was actively supported by the workers; it also drew in broad strata of the peasantry. The peasants themselves often sent messengers to the Soviets with the request to put a stop to the actions of some of their politically backward fellow-villagers.

On October 5, 1918, the movement for the protection of works of cultural value, which had become statewide, was made official by a special decree of the Council of People's Commissars, "On the Registration and Protection of Artistic and Historical Monuments in Possession of Individuals, Societies and Institutions". The responsibility for enforcing it was placed on the local Soviets.

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<sup>1</sup> This government of the bourgeoisie and landlords, which existed from March 2(15) till October 25 (November 7), 1917, pursued the anti-popular policy of continuing Russia's participation in the First World War and suppressing the revolutionary movement. It was overthrown by the October Revolution.

The Soviets handled with care everything which constituted the pride of national culture. For instance, the Tula Soviet of Workers', Soldiers' and Peasants' Deputies placed under its protection the estate of Leo Tolstoy in Yasnaya Polyana; the Soviet of Klin, a town near Moscow, took under its protection the house of the great composer Peter Tchaikovsky. On October 15, 1918, the Moscow Gubernia Soviet discussed the question of evicting the Goncharov family, descendants of Alexander Pushkin, from their estate in Lopasnya, but decided "to make an exception for the grandchildren of the great Russian poet Alexander Pushkin living in the said estate."

Together with the land, factories and mills the state nationalized the richest collections of works of Russian and West European art and literature belonging to private museums, archives, publishing houses, cinema enterprises and book funds, making them accessible to the broad masses of the people.

Having undertaken to protect cultural treasures, the Soviet government found the necessary means to do it even during the foreign military intervention and Civil War, which started in the spring of 1918.

Measures were also taken to prevent the shipping of cultural treasures abroad. The government issued a special decree and established new customs rules, in which it was stated that "articles of artistic or antiquarian value are subject to unconditional confiscation".

In our days as well, protection of the cultural heritage remains an important duty of the state and public. This sphere is governed by a number of relevant legislative acts, while the principal rights and duties of Soviet citizens laid down in the

1977 Constitution of the USSR include the duty to protect the country's historical and cultural monuments.

**Equality  
and freedom**

Pre-revolutionary society in Russia consisted of estates with unequal rights and privileges. Privileges for some and restrictions for others extended to all aspects of social life, including access to knowledge and culture.

The very system of education asserted this inequality. There were primary schools for the common folk. The doors of the institutions of higher learning were closed to the majority of the population.

On 11 (24), November 1917, the All-Russia Central Executive Committee, the country's highest legislative body, abolished all the estates and estate divisions, privileges and disabilities, organizations and institutions. One common name—citizen of the Soviet Republic—was established for the entire population of the country.

In tsarist Russia, the Uzbeks, Kazakhs, Kirghiz, Azerbaijanians, Tatars, Bashkirs and other nationalities not only suffered from social oppression but were subjected to religious discrimination. Orthodoxy was the official religion, and the rights of the Moslems, Catholics, Buddhists, Jews and representatives of other religions were infringed in various ways. The Orthodox Church was a part of the state apparatus, and the tsar himself was regarded as its potentate. This church received vast subsidies and enjoyed the exclusive right to propagate its faith. Many offices in the country could be held only by its members.

A special decree, "On Freedom of Conscience and Church and Religious Associations" ensured

complete freedom of conscience to all citizens of Russia. It laid down that "every citizen has the right to profess any religion or none" and stated that discrimination against any faith was impermissible. The decree separated the church from the state, which meant that state bodies ceased interfering in church affairs, while the church was freed from organizational and material dependence on the state. All religions were given equal rights. The decree prohibited the issue of any laws or local ordinances which would infringe or restrict freedom of conscience, equal for all the citizens of the country.<sup>1</sup>

In December 1917 it was announced that church weddings, alongside the now obligatory civil ones, "are a private affair of the couple intending to get married." From now on divorce, which used to be allowed by the church only in exceptional cases, could be obtained from local government bodies. A statement by one of the spouses was sufficient to get a divorce. It is interesting that immediately after the publication of this decree the number of divorces began sharply to exceed the number of marriages. An active process of people liberating themselves from enslaving, unequal marriages contracted before the revolution had set in. It was a kind of "social" purge which made family life healthier and delivered men and women from false and hypocritical relationships. Later on, in the second half of 1918, the number of divorces began to decrease.

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<sup>1</sup> At present there are 20,000 temples of different religious denominations. More than 100 new ones were built in the five years between 1976 and 1980, among them Orthodox churches, mosques, etc. The 1977 Constitution of the USSR guarantees freedom of conscience. Any discrimination on the basis of religion is a criminal offence.



*In April 1919 the Soviet government adopted a decree on the nationalization of health resorts. The state monopoly of health resorts made them accessible to all citizens. On photo: one of the first people's sanatoria opened in the city of Sochi on the Caucasian coast of the Black sea.*

In the very first days of Soviet power an end was put to one of the most infamous legacies of the past—women's lack of rights. "It is said that the best criterion of the cultural level," Lenin wrote, "is the legal status of women. This aphorism contains a grain of profound truth. From this standpoint only the dictatorship of the proletariat, only the socialist state could attain, as it has attained, the highest cultural level".

Women were enfranchised. Access to all higher schools was opened to them. They received the op-

portunity to participate in political, social and cultural life on a par with men. Even in the most difficult times, when the gains of the revolution had to be defended with arms, when fuel and material resources were in short supply, the workers' and peasants' state opened crèches and kindergartens, public catering kitchens, sanatoria and medical establishments, to look after the health of young mothers and children.

Incidentally, the rations were the same for the children of members of the nobility and the bourgeoisie and workers and peasants.

As distinct from adults, children had milk, eggs, honey—if only in small amounts and not always, but at least in equal measure. To many parents this was the most effective explanation of the essence and aims of Soviet power.

Great repercussions were caused at home and abroad by the publication of documents in which the Soviet government proclaimed equal rights and freedoms for all the peoples of Russia.

The main principles of the nationalities policy of the new government were set out in the Declaration of Rights of the Peoples of Russia as early as November 2 (15), 1917, only a week after the victory of the revolution.

This declaration established the equality and sovereignty of the peoples, their right to self-determination up to secession and the formation of independent states, and announced the abolition of all national and national-religious privileges and restrictions and the free development of national minorities and groups inhabiting the territory of the Soviet republic.

In a special address of the government, "To All the Working Moslems of Russia and the East", da-



ted November 20 (December 3), 1917, it was stressed:

“Henceforth your beliefs and customs, your national and cultural institutions are declared free and inviolable.”

These words were addressed to those whose beliefs, customs and culture were trampled with especial disregard before the revolution.

The new government proclaimed:

“Build your national life in a free and unimpeded way. You have the right to this.”

It guaranteed:

“Know that your rights, just as the rights of all the other peoples of Russia are protected by the whole might of the revolution and its government bodies—Soviets of Workers’, Soldiers’ and Peasants’ Deputies”.

On Lenin’s initiative, a Commissariat for the Affairs of Nationalities was set up within the Council of People’s Commissars. Such a ministry had never existed in any country before. Relying on a ramified network of national departments at the local Soviets, the commissariat implemented the Party’s nationalities policy, taking into account the specifics of each national region.

In January 1918 the 3rd All-Russia Congress of Soviets—the revolutionary parliament of Russia—proclaimed the country a federal republic established on the basis of a free alliance of free nations.

The federal arrangement of state life presupposed the development of statehood of the formerly oppressed non-Russian peoples, the organization of administration, of organs of economic management and the judiciary, with the native language becoming the state language.

All the peoples of Russia were granted the right freely to develop their national culture on the basis of national characteristics of their life and traditions, and to set up national schools, newspapers, theatres, club houses, etc.

Thus, in its very first days the October Revolution proclaimed the equality and freedom of all the working people of the country, of all nations and nationalities, of women and men. More, it guaranteed this freedom and this equality.

### **Constructive work**

The Soviet government's success in its cultural initiatives was due to what Lenin called "the thirst for knowledge", which was "popular in the real sense of the word". Even in the most out-of-the-way regions of the country there remained not a single person who was not involved in the changes that were under way. All the achievements of the workers and peasants of Russia on the road to literacy, to genuine culture, were directly connected with their constructive, creative activities. Culture was becoming not only the property of the masses of working people, but also their affair.

In the first place, this concerned the attitude to labour. For centuries had this attitude depended only on those who bought labour. They paid more or less, but it always amounted to plunder. The striving for profit determined the logic of any employer. And it was impossible to expect a respectful attitude to labour on the part of those to whom it was a bitter necessity.

The revolution turned factories and mills over to the working people, freeing labour from relations of exploitation. It restored the real value of labour. It is not fortuitous that a monument to emancipated labour was one of the first monuments erected



*In 1918-20 in keeping with Lenin's plan of monumental propaganda, monuments and plaques commemorating revolutionaries and progressive cultural figures were erected in Moscow, Petrograd and other cities. On photo: Lenin lays the foundation stone of a monument to Karl Marx in Moscow on May, 1, 1920.*

by the new government. Speaking at a meeting dedicated to laying the foundation stone of the monument on May 1, 1920, Lenin said:

“Comrades, this was once the site of the monument to a tsar. Today we are laying the foundation stone of a monument to the glory of liberated labour. The capitalists used to speak of the freedom of labour, while the workers and the peasants were

obliged to sell them their labour and, in consequence, were free to die of starvation. We call that kind of labour wage-slavery. We know that it is no easy matter to organize free labour in the proper way and to work in the conditions of the difficult times we are living through... but if we carry on in the same way we shall create a kind of labour that is genuinely free."

In the young Soviet Republic liberated labour for the good of each and everyone was becoming the principal force of transformation.

However, this was not immediately understood by everyone. It was necessary to rise to this understanding. There were workers who considered that freedom meant the possibility to work when one felt like it. The first months after the revolution witnessed serious debates on whether it was necessary to go to work every day, to keep to the quotas and schedules, to make pay dependent on one's performance, etc.

Nevertheless, foremost sections of the working class proved, as always, equal to the occasion, coming forward with the initiative to organize production at the now state-owned enterprises. At plants and factories they worked out their own regulations governing discipline and the organization of labour.

An example which many followed was shown by the workers of the Bryansky plant in the small Russian town of Bezhitsa. The regulations outlined by them envisaged punishment for violations of discipline and pay only for work done, and stressed the need for single management. Lenin regarded highly the "Bryansky rules" and recommended that they be applied at other enterprises.

In 1919 another movement, unthinkable before the revolution, was launched—the movement for



*In the Civil War years working people initiated subbotniks—work without pay in free time to speed up the elimination of the economic dislocation. Photo shows a communist subbotnik on the Alexandrovskaya Railway Line in Moscow on May 1, 1920.*

voluntary work without pay in free time. On a Saturday (*subbota* in Russian) the Communists of the Moscow Railway Depot repaired without remuneration several steam locomotives urgently needed by the army in the field. Thus came into being the *subbotniks*, which Lenin called a great beginning, seeing in work for public benefit the embryo of future communist relationships.

The Russian working class asserted and shaped a culture of labour, worthy of free men. This broadened and enriched the very concept of "culture" and served to democratize it.

Lenin feared nothing when it came to creating a new culture, no matter how unexpected it seemed at first glance even to some of his comrades-in-arms, people with decades of experience of struggle for the freedom and happiness of the working people.

"...In our present life," Lenin wrote in the early 1920s, "reckless audacity goes hand in hand, to an astonishing degree, with timidity of thought..."

Using Lenin's words, the drawing of vast masses of people into the work of running the state was "reckless audacity" in the social life of that time, while failure to understand the need to be taught by representatives of the vanquished class in order to learn how to administer the state was "timidity of thought".

It was Lenin who, speaking at the 11th Party Congress, drew the subsequently famous picture of a car breaking out of control and dashing in the wrong direction because of its poor driver. Lenin called for learning management skills and fought against management by decree, self-conceit and intolerance. To this day the special style of state administration that took shape in Lenin's time is called "Leninist".

The chief of a state institution, in Lenin's words, must possess a high degree of personal appeal and sufficiently solid scientific and technical knowledge to be able to check people's work.

"The task that the Soviet government must set the people in all its scope," he stressed, "is — learn to work."

And the country was learning to work, building a new life and a new culture.

As a first priority, relief was organized for those who were worst off. As of May 15, 1918, there were more than 300,000 unemployed in the republic. For them, culture began with the right to social insurance—not in the form of charity or good grace, but the state-guaranteed right of unfailing assistance if a person could not find employment at the rate of pay established by the trade unions or labour exchanges. Soviet power was the first in history to recognize this right.

In keeping with special regulations adopted in December 1917, the unemployed had the right to an allowance beginning from the fourth day of unemployment. The relief fund was made up of voluntary donations from the population and from organizations, and of deductions from the progressive income tax (tax on income from property and inheritance).

To give people employment, government bodies organized public works to procure fuel and clear the streets. Workshops, smithies and carpentry shops were opened.

There was the difficult work of organizing medical assistance to the population. The war and economic dislocation gave rise to numerous epidemics of cholera, small-pox, typhus and influenza. Newspapers were full of announcements prohibiting entry into many cities in Russia where epidemics were rife.

Added to this was the shortage of doctors, nurses, doctor's assistants and pharmacists. In pre-revolutionary Russia, with a population of 150 million, there were a little over 23,000 doctors and 50,000 paramedical personnel. Only one-quarter of them worked in the countryside.

Senior-year students of medical colleges took part in combatting epidemics. The nurses' courses set up in local regions quickly won popularity among women workers and peasants.

Private hospitals and out-patient clinics, clinics belonging to charitable societies and bodies of public self-government, pharmacies and pharmaceutical shops were nationalized. The Soviet government opened new hospitals, organized dispensaries and medical assistance at home. Medical assistance was becoming generally accessible and for the first time free of charge.

Much was being done to improve the living conditions of workers and peasants. Large housing estates in the cities were nationalized and requisitioned. Wage and salary workers of the Soviet apparatus were moved from hovels and basements into flats with amenities. In the countryside, farmhands and poor peasants settled in the former landlords' estates.

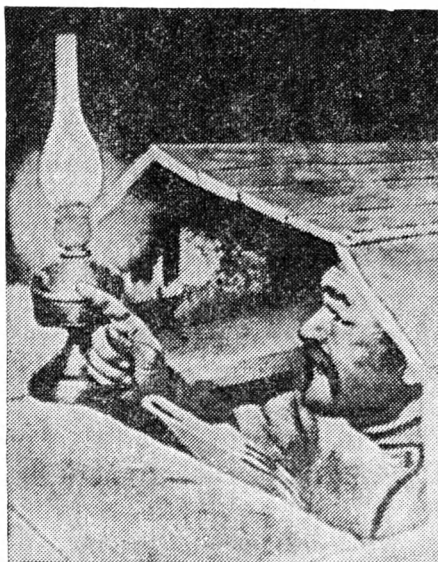
The government abolished private news agencies, confiscated news stalls and united all book-selling enterprises.

In October 1918 the first central Soviet news agency, the Russian Telegraph Agency, was organized. Party and local government newspapers appeared in all provinces and in the largest cities. Lenin kept a watchful eye on the character of their publications. He said:

"We must convert—and we shall convert—the press from an organ for purveying sensations, from a mere apparatus for communicating political news, from an organ of struggle against bourgeois lying—into an instrument for the economic re-education of the masses, into an instrument for telling the masses how to organize work in a new way."

The publication of books for the people grew





*The people's craving for culture was so great that in the first post-revolutionary years amateur theatres opened even in villages, with literate peasants or workers from nearby towns acting and directing. The stage was often lighted only with kerosene lamps, but the audiences were always large.*



steadily. The character of publications changed with a sharp increase in the output of political publications explaining to the reader the essence of the proletarian revolution and of Soviet power.

The organization of large-scale publishing of literature was conducted with the active participation of such outstanding Russian writers and poets as Maxim Gorky, Alexander Blok and Valeri Bryusov.

In December 1917 the first State Publishing House was established to print classical works of Russian and world literature.

In November 1917 on Lenin's instructions, a plan for the reorganization of the library system was drawn up. The principal book stock was concentrated in public libraries, turning them into important centres for the enlightenment of the masses. The revolution breathed new life into the pre-revolutionary "people's houses", which became general institutions of culture and enlightenment. Each of them had its own library and reading room, and organized amateur art groups and lectures on various themes.

In the first year of proletarian power people's universities came into being. Their program included lecture courses on general educational and technical subjects, agricultural production, etc.

The creative genius of the masses also gave rise to new forms of cultural-enlightenment activity, such as workers' and peasants' theatres, music circles, people's studios for creative experiment, and so on. The people's thirst for art was so great that the local Soviets often established their own picture galleries and museums, disregarding the systematic work done by state bodies in this field. Eventually this mistake was corrected.

All these cultural initiatives vividly illustrated

the distinctions between proletarian and bourgeois democracy. Lenin wrote: "Only Soviet Russia has given the proletariat and the whole vast labouring majority of Russia *freedom and democracy* unprecedented, impossible and inconceivable in any bourgeois democratic republic, by, for example, taking the palaces and mansions away from the bourgeoisie (without which freedom of assembly is sheer hypocrisy), by taking the print-shops and stocks of paper away from the capitalists (without which freedom of the press for the nation's labouring majority is a lie), and by replacing bourgeois parliamentarism by the democratic organization of the *Soviets, which are a thousand times* nearer to the people and more democratic than the most democratic bourgeois parliament."

Ahead lay the challenging task of enlightening the masses politically and explaining to them the essence of the transformations initiated by the new government. To carry this out the Council of People's Commissars decided to mobilize all literate persons in the republic aged between 16 and 50. Each of them was charged with informing illiterate people about the government's undertakings.

Mobilization is an extraordinary event. In the army it means making the armed forces fully ready for action. Responding to the desire of the working people to understand what was happening, the government was compelled to mobilize the literate population to carry out the highly important task of enlightening workers and peasants politically.

"An illiterate person," Lenin said, "stands outside politics..." An end had to be put to this harmful phenomenon which hindered further advance and put in jeopardy everything gained through the revolutionary impulse and the selflessness of the masses.

**“We are not slaves.  
We shall win”**

**“Down with  
illiteracy!”**

Illiteracy was perhaps the worst legacy of tsarist Russia.

The gap between the refined education of a handful of members of the ruling classes and the ignorance of the bulk of the people was appalling. Millions of workers and peasants were, in Lenin's words, “robbed... of education, light and knowledge”.

According to the national census of 1897, literate persons made up only 28.4 per cent of the population. In other words, nearly three-quarters of the population were illiterate. Illiteracy was especially glaring in the national provinces of the empire: 98 per cent in Tajikistan, 97 per cent in Kirghizia, 96 in Uzbekistan, and so on. “It is easier to meet an oasis in the desert here than a literate man,” it used to be said of Central Asia. This was said by peoples who in the past gave the world such thinkers and scholars as ibn-Sina (Avicenna), Biruni, Firdausi, Nawoi and Ulug-Beg.

Many national minorities had no written language of their own. This was the case, for instance, of the Chukchees living in the Extreme North, on



*Three-fourths of the population of tsarist Russia were illiterate. The Soviet government concentrated its efforts on eliminating this painful legacy of the past. Special centres were opened throughout the country where in the evenings after work, millions of men and women opened their first primers.*

the shores of the Arctic Ocean. Even in the beginning of this century they remained at the level of primitive communal tribes. They lighted their dwellings with stone cups filled with seal fat in which a moss wick floated. Using bone needles, they sewed clothes from the skins of young reindeer, which they wore without underwear. Like the other small groups of northern peoples, they believed in evil and kind spirits. They obtained fire by rapidly rotating a wooden stick in a hollow in a special board. There were no literate people among the Chukchees. The word "study" did not exist in their language.

With the rate of development of education that existed at that time, attainment of universal literacy

among men would have taken 180 years, and among women more than 280 years. The tsarist authorities had nothing against such rates, but the new workers' and peasants' Russia did.

The very first message of the People's Commissariat for Public Education to the working people, "On Public Education" (October 29, 1917), outlined measures for restructuring the system of public education and setting the task of combatting mass illiteracy. It stressed that the campaign against illiteracy and ignorance could not be limited to teaching children and juveniles. The illiteracy of the adult population also had to be eliminated.

For this purpose the People's Commissariat for Public Education set up an adult education department which was headed by Nadezhda Krupskaya, Lenin's wife and colleague, who was a well-known authority in the field of pedagogy and one of those involved in building the new Soviet school.

Special centres were organized for eliminating adult illiteracy. They were called *likbez*s (after the Russian "*LIK*vidiruyem *BEZ*gramotnost"—"Let's eliminate illiteracy"). The first centres were opened in Petrograd, Moscow, Tashkent and other cities. First manuals were published in the form of small booklets: "How to Teach Illiterate Adults", "Methods of Extra-School Enlightenment Work", "A Detailed Plan of Classes to Teach the ABC with a Description of Methods of Instruction", etc.

The problems were innumerable. For example, part of the population, especially the rural population and mainly in the national borderlands, at first refused to attend the *likbez*s. Because of their cultural backwardness they could not understand the need for education. The Chukchees, for instance, believed that "one should teach the reindeer, one should teach the dog, but why should one

teach man?"—in the sense that man himself knows how to earn his living and how to live. It was noted in a document of the People's Commissariat for the Affairs of Nationalities that the indigenous population of the North "fears most of all three things: papers with stamps, military service, and schools".

The Soviet government did not conceal the serious difficulties which lay on the path to universal literacy.

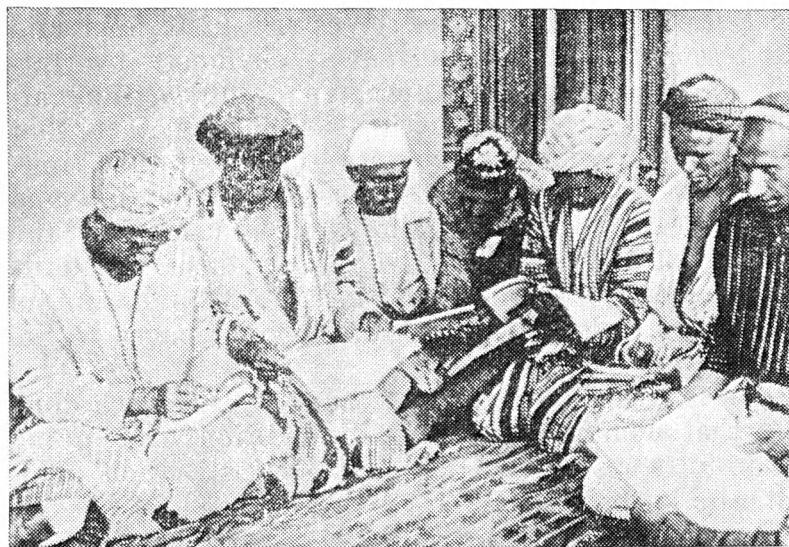
"Wasn't it an utopian task rapidly to do away with illiteracy in our illiterate Russia," Nadezhda Krupskaya wrote, "where the female population is 100 per cent illiterate in some parts and where one-half of the male population cannot spell their names? To eliminate illiteracy in a country where some provinces have up to 300,000 illiterate people each, and to do this in the absence of primers, paper, pencils, pens, etc.? So it seemed to many."

Local government bodies introduced various concessions to attract illiterate people to *likbez*s. For instance, at industrial enterprises, on cooperative farms and in Soviet institutions those who studied had their working day reduced by two hours while receiving full pay. In some Ukrainian villages peasants attending *likbez*s were given priority in having their grain milled at mills. In Byelorussia, *likbez*s were allotted plots of land and the income was left at their disposal.

Following the call of the Soviet government, teachers, students and literate workers and peasants joined in the movement for literacy. Young people were especially active. They worked not only in the cities, but also in out-of-the-way villages in Russia, Byelorussia, Tataria, the Northern Caucasus and Central Asia. "Down with Illiteracy!" was one of the most popular slogans of the day.



*Particularly impressive were the successes in eliminating illiteracy in the republics of the Soviet East. Within 20 years the percentage of literate persons rose from 6 to 80.*





The Red Army became a mass school for eliminating illiteracy. Classes were conducted in the barracks, on marches, during quiet spells between battles, and in places where military units were formed. Red Army men who were studying received an additional monetary allowance.

On December 26, 1919, the decree "On the Elimination of Illiteracy Among the Population of the Russian Federation", signed by Lenin, was published. It obliged the entire population of the republic aged between 8 and 50 to learn to read and write in their native language or in Russian, as they wished.

In July 1920, on Lenin's proposal, a special All-Russia Extraordinary Commission for the Elimination of Illiteracy (*VeCheKa-likbez*) was set up.

The term *VeCheKa* is best known as the name of the commission for struggle against counter-revolution and sabotage. This was an organ which protected the revolutionary gains of the Soviet Republic. This *VeCheKa* is mentioned in many historical and literary works. Western historians and writers stress its exclusiveness, obviously overrating its role and importance. In doing so they almost always pass over in silence the fact that many such commissions were set up at that time. This made it possible to concentrate attention and efforts on the most pressing tasks, using all the means at hand. The activities of the All-Russia Extraordinary Commission for the Elimination of Illiteracy added one of the most vivid pages to Soviet history.

Within less than three years the vast work done by that commission created conditions for going over to a systematic and planned instruction of illiterate people. This work was headed by the "Down with Illiteracy" society, whose chairman

was in view of the importance of the problem, Mikhail Kalinin, the first Soviet President (Chairman of the All-Russia Central Executive Committee).

Receiving great material assistance from the state, the "Down with Illiteracy" society established thousands of *likbez* schools all over the country. It also distributed writing utensils, paper, books, etc.

Already by the mid-twenties literacy had grown two- to four-fold compared with pre-revolutionary times. But that was not enough. The drive continued unabated. All told, in the twenty years between 1921 and 1940, approximately 60 million people were taught to read and write.

At the time of the 1939 census the number of literate people in the country constituted more than 87 per cent of the population. Even in the Central Asian republics their number ranged from 70 to 80 per cent.

Thus, the literacy level of all the peoples of the country had been evened out, in the main before the outbreak of the Second World War. Subsequently the gap was closed and since the end of the 1950s all censuses have testified to the all-out literacy of the population.

"Within the lifetime of a single generation the Soviet land liberated itself completely and for ever from the onerous burden of illiteracy," Leonid Brezhnev noted in his report devoted to the 60th anniversary of the October Revolution.

### **The ABC book**

The country's progress towards its outer space exploits started from the primers which were compiled for illiterate workers and peasants in the gruelling years of the Civil War and intervention.

It was a difficult time. There was a shortage of pencils and paper. There was one note-book for several people. Chalk was regarded as a treasure and the study aids were outdated.

In the summer of 1919 Dora Elkina, a young teacher, was conducting a lesson with illiterate Red Armymen on the South Front. When her pupils read their first sentence, which was "Masha ate porridge", they burst out laughing. It certainly was funny for grown-up people, defenders of the revolution, to read such a childish thing. When, after overcoming her embarrassment, the teacher wrote out a new sentence on the blackboard "We are not slaves. We shall win", everybody liked it.

In wartime conditions pupils were replaced frequently and Dora Elkina, who had to teach new ones all the time, soon understood that a new text was needed. In the autumn of 1919 she compiled a primer filled with phrases having a political meaning. It was the first Soviet ABC book for adults.

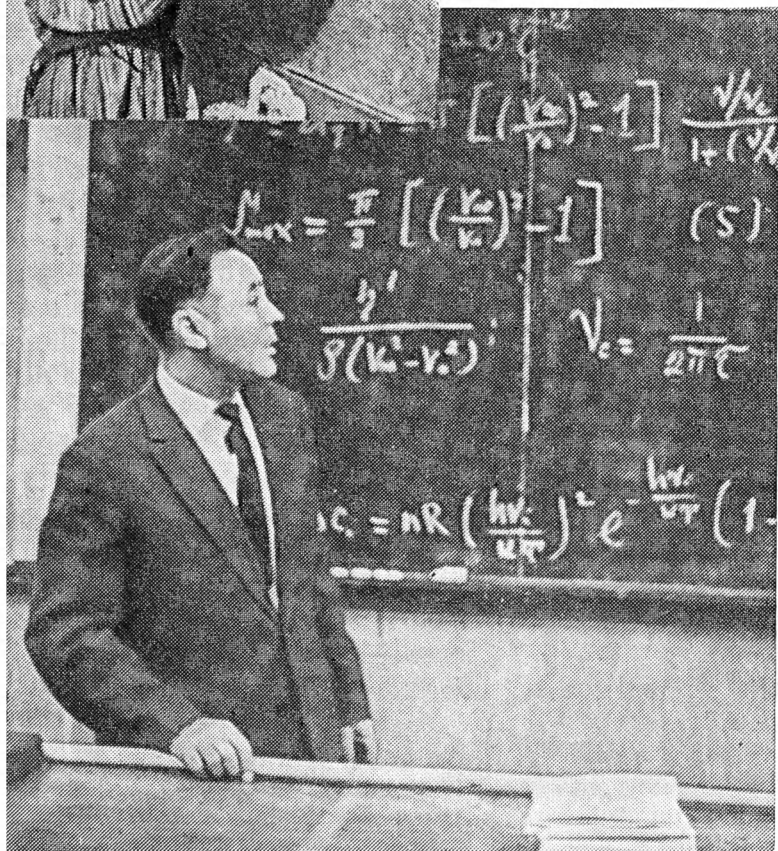
At its first sitting the *VeCheKa-likbez* discussed, among other things, the question of primers for adults. On Krupskaya's proposal, Elkina's primer was accepted as the basic text, and work was started to improve it.

In 1920 *A Primer for Workers, A Political ABC Book* and a number of primers in the Tatar, Chuvash, Polish, Kirghiz and other languages were put out. In the one year of its activities the *VeCheKa-likbez* prepared 39 different primers. Special booklets, a magazine for semi-literate people and colourful posters were also published.

The revolution opened up the possibility also of solving some linguistic problems of non-Russian peoples. By October 1917 only 20 out of the 130



1926. Turkmen peasant Ata Berdiyev was among those who learned to read and write at a liquidation of illiteracy centre. Forty years later Ata Berdiyev, Dr.Sc. (Tech.) became director of the Physico-Technical Institute of the Academy of Sciences of the Turkmen SSR.



peoples of the country had more or less developed written languages. The work on primers was conducted alongside the work of Russian linguists on the study of non-Russian languages and dialects, the creation of new alphabets and the development of the literary languages of many peoples of Russia. Already in the 1920s the Abazins, Laks, Nogais, Balkars, Tuvans, Adygheis and many other peoples received, for the first time in their history, books and study aids in their native languages.

Not everything went smoothly in this process. Not all the recommendations stood the test of time. However, 15-20 years after the revolution, more than 40 peoples received written languages of their own.<sup>1</sup> Today instruction in secondary and higher schools in all the Soviet republics is done in local languages, which are freely used in all spheres of political, socio-economic and cultural life of the peoples of the USSR.

Many years have passed since the time of the first primers. The country has attained great successes in the development of education, science and culture, with millions proceeding from the ABC to higher mathematics. Its present achievements are epitomized in space flights.

### **The new school**

The system of school education that existed in the pre-revolutionary period reflected in full measure the tenor of social life in tsarist Russia. The school was used as an instrument of class domination and was permeated with caste spirit. Its purpose, as Lenin said,

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<sup>1</sup> In 1924, the Central Publishing House of the Peoples of the USSR put out literature in 25 languages of the peoples of the country; in 1927, in 41 languages; in 1929, in 56 languages; and in 1931, in 76 languages.

“was to supply the capitalists with obedient lackeys and able workers”.

Secondary school was accessible to few children of working people. Female education was consciously held back. The handful of schools in the national regions were attended primarily by children of Russian officials and army officers and not by the local population.

The proletarian state endeavoured to start the reorganization of public education immediately after the establishment of Soviet power.

Here is how the new trend in public education was characterized by Anatoli Lunacharsky, the People's Commissar for Public Education:

“The ideal is equal and, as far as possible, high education for all citizens. Until this has been realized for all, the natural transition to all stages of learning up to the university... should be made dependent exclusively on pupils' abilities and be absolutely independent of the material conditions of their families...”

The regulations “On the Organization of Public Education in the Russian Soviet Republic” and “On the Uniform Labour School”, adopted in 1918, gave legislative embodiment to the democratization of public education. The old division of schools into primary, secondary (grammar) and professional (modern) ones was abolished. A uniform labour school was instituted with only two stages: the first for 8 to 13-year-olds and the second for 13 to 17-year-olds. Tuition became free. Corporal punishment was prohibited and school self-administration was established.

The Soviet government gave important assistance to the new school, handing over to it former palaces and estates, building new and repairing old school buildings, providing pupils with meals,

clothing and footwear. But there was still a shortage of school buildings, especially in the initial period. The existing ones were poorly heated and ill suited for studies. The needs of the front prevented a large-scale output of study aids and school equipment.

But, as they say, necessity is the mother of invention. In the conditions of economic breakdown and hunger the teachers and pupils displayed remarkable resourcefulness and ingenuity. Instead of pencils they used charcoal and lead sticks. Ink was made from red beet, soot, cranberries and even cones. They wrote with charcoal on whitened walls, old iron sheets and wooden boards and in Central Asia even on white felt. Sometimes they wrote simply on sand. But they studied, and did their best.

The shortage of teachers was particularly acute. Many of them sabotaged work in new schools. Many schools in Moscow, Petrograd and other cities were closed down because of the teachers' refusal to perform their duties.

In numerous speeches Lenin explained to the teachers the policy of the Party and the Soviet state in the sphere of public education, arguing that only the Soviet system made the school a genuinely people's school and enabled it to realize the ideas of great pedagogues in practice, and he urged teachers to support the new school.

The change in the consciousness of the teachers did not come about overnight. And yet they became the first large contingent from the intelligentsia who came over to the side of Soviet power.

In the initial period serious harm to the new school was also done by some "Left" experimenters, who tried to introduce a number of ultra-revolutionary innovations—to abolish classes, home as-

signments, curricula and textbooks and to make pupils learn by a team method. But their ideas were soon refuted by reality.

Within a very short space of time the Soviet government succeeded in establishing a uniform statewide system of public education. The problem of personnel was solved. The resistance of bourgeois specialists was quelled and their knowledge and experience were used in the interests of workers' and peasants' power.

By the end of the 1930s curricula had been worked out, taking into account the highest scientific and pedagogical achievements of the time. Standard textbooks had been written. Universal compulsory seven-year schooling had been introduced.

Today the transition to universal secondary education has been completed in the USSR. This is one of the Soviet people's greatest social achievements.

The task of eliminating illiteracy, not an easy one even in the central regions of the country, was particularly difficult in the borderlands. There the material means necessary for instruction were not sufficient to accomplish a cultural revolution. A patient struggle had to be waged against moribund but still surviving prejudices and customs. Not all parents allowed their children, especially girls, to go to school. In Central Asia, former rich estate-owners and rich landowners actively resisted, often with arms in hand, the introduction of education for the people.

The first state bodies showed consideration for the traditions and customs of the people and did not hurry to carry into life the decree on the separation of the school from the church. For in-



stance, in the Moslem regions religious schools were not abolished and replaced by secular ones, but for a long time coexisted with the constantly strengthening state schools. In August 1922 the People's Commissariat for Public Education of Turkestan allowed religious instruction in some educational establishments if the population wanted it.

As a result of extensive explanatory work among the population, the network of confessional schools was gradually and naturally diminishing.

It was different in Kazakhstan, where the bulk of the population led a nomadic and semi-nomadic way of life. It was quite a job for the local public education bodies to work out the school time-table for the settled, nomadic and semi-nomadic regions. There the stress was on the establishment of boarding schools.

The problem of female education, too, was hard to solve, especially in Central Asia and Kazakhstan. The Soviet government opened special schools for adult women and also women's teacher training colleges and general educational schools for girls, and published newspapers and magazines for women. In every republic this problem was tackled, taking account of local conditions. In some republics girls were taught in special boarding schools, where they were fully state-maintained, in others sewing and carpet-making circles were set up at schools, to which parents willingly sent girls, etc.

**For the first time  
in history**

The higher school was also being remodelled. The Soviet government made it accessible to the masses of the people and set before it the task of training scientific personnel and spe-

cialists primarily from among the working people in all branches of industry, agriculture and culture.

A landmark event was the passing of the decree on August 2, 1918, "On Rules of Admission to Higher Schools of the Russian Federation", which abolished tuition fees and instructed higher schools to give priority to young workers and peasants when admitting new students.

From the spring of 1918 new higher schools began to open which were geared to the requirements of both the national economy as a whole and of the economies of individual regions. Higher education in the national regions, which had not existed in the past, now began to develop. The institutions of higher learning that were opened in the first year of proletarian dictatorship included a polytechnical institute in Ivanovo Voznesensk, the country's oldest textile centre, a mining academy in Moscow, and state universities in such former backwoods as the Non-Black Soil Zone, the Volga area and the Urals. Universities also appeared in Central Asia, Kazakhstan, Transcaucasia and Byelorussia. These were helped by the teaching staff of Moscow, Petrograd and other cities.

For instance, in early 1920 a railway train from the front was placed at the disposal of a group of professors and lecturers from Moscow's higher schools in order to bring them, together with laboratory equipment and study aids, to Tashkent, capital of Turkestan (Central Asia). Railway communication had been so seriously disrupted during the Civil War that it took the train almost two months to reach Tashkent.

On September 7, 1920, Lenin signed a decree on the establishment of the Turkestan State University in Tashkent. Initially it consisted of six faculties. Difficulties arose, however, during admis-



*Soviet power brought higher education within the reach of every citizen. Before the revolution, only 22 Kazakhs had received higher education. Today, with 169 students per 10,000 of the population, Kazakhstan is ahead of Britain, France and Italy. On photo: 1934, in a laboratory of the Kazakh State University. The university laid the foundations for the republic's higher education system.*

sion: the young men and women from among the native population did not have a sufficiently high educational standard to study at a university. To facilitate their access to higher education, a preparatory faculty was opened for workers where admission was without examinations. There young people received a secondary education and prepared for entrance to the university.

Later, on the basis of faculties and chairs at Turkestan University, there appeared other higher schools in Central Asia—a medical, an agricultural and a polytechnical institute and many research centres.

The Academy of Sciences of Uzbekistan also owes its birth to the first Central Asian university.



*In 1920 Lenin signed a decree on the institution of the Turkestan State University in Tashkent. The republic had no lecturers of its own. Lecturers and professors from institutes in Moscow and Petrograd (on photo) went to Tashkent to help in establishing institutions of higher learning in Soviet Central Asia.*

By 1927 the country already had more than 150 higher educational establishments, compared to 105 in 1914. By 1940 their number had risen to 817. Sixty-seven of them were in Central Asia and Kazakhstan, 25 in Byelorussia, 16 in Azerbaijan, and 9 in Armenia. Before the revolution there had not been a single higher school there.

Just as at Turkestan University, an extensive network of workers' faculties was established throughout the country for accelerated training of working youth.

Along with the setting up of new higher schools the Soviet government modified all curricula to correspond to the new requirements of the national economy. The higher school accelerated the tremendous changes that were taking place in the

political organization of the country, particularly in industrialization and the collectivization of agriculture.

The task of training specialists from among workers and peasants was fairly quickly accomplished giving rise to an intelligentsia which not only served the people but by origin was an integral part of the people.

At present, about 80 per cent of those employed in the national economy have a higher or secondary education, the percentage of them being 75 among workers and about 60 among farmers.

As a result of the cultural revolution the USSR saw a growth in the educational and cultural level of all nations and nationalities, unprecedented in its scope and speed. The country, most of whose population had formerly been illiterate, soared to the summits of science and culture. The line from the old ABC book "We are not slaves. We shall win", had a new meaning now.

# Science and society

**“A task  
of world-historic  
difficulty”**

Even before the 1917 Revolution Lenin in his program work “The Bolsheviks Must Assume Power”,

included organization of science among the most important problems which would face the future workers' and peasants' state. He envisaged a considerate attitude to scientific personnel, and the preservation and further development of all organizational forms of scientific research which had been proved useful in practice. After the victory of the revolution the working class, which had taken power in its hands, was confronted with the task of organizing scientific and technical research and winning bourgeois specialists over to its side.

Lenin stressed repeatedly the difficulties Soviet power had to overcome in using the scientific and technical achievements of capitalism for socialist construction. Knowledge and experience belonged to specialists and a large part of them gave a hostile reception to the new power, believing in the myth of its vandalistic nature. The question arose: How to use bourgeois specialists without

waiting for the time when Soviet power would have trained its own?

"...This task is one that calls for tremendous effort..." Lenin said. "If we cannot do this at once it should not give rise to the slightest pessimism, because the task which we set ourselves is a task of world-historic difficulty and significance."

History could offer no recipes and recommendations—they simply did not exist.

In early November 1917 the People's Commissariat for Public Education organized a science department, which set about registering scientific personnel, organizing scientific institutions and coordinating their work. When the question of reorganization of the Russian Academy of Sciences, founded in 1724, was raised in the department, Lenin became worried. He summoned the People's Commissar for Public Education and warned him against ill-considered steps.

"We have no time to deal with the Academy in real earnest now," Lenin said, "and this is a question of statewide importance. Caution, tact and extensive knowledge are needed here, and at the moment we are preoccupied with more accursed problems. If some daredevil from among your staff pounces upon the Academy and breaks a lot of glass you'll have to be called to strict account..."

Once the great French writer Victor Hugo predicted that military battles would give way to scientific ones.

But when will this happen?

Lenin wrote his famous "Draft Plan of Scientific and Technical Work", the world's first long-term plan for science and technology, in 1918, exactly half a year after the assault on the Winter Palace. At that time the troops of the British, French and American invaders were advancing from

Murmansk to Vologda and the Germans were attacking in the Ukraine. The White Guard generals Krasnov, Denikin, Yudenich and Admiral Kolchak were embarking on their plans for "saving the Fatherland". In those days Lenin signed a decree on the establishment of an evacuation commission and at the same time pointed to the need to instruct the Academy of Sciences "to set up a number of expert commissions for the speediest possible compilation of a plan for the reorganization of industry and the economic progress of Russia".

On April 12, 1918, at a sitting of the Council of People's Commissars under the chairmanship of Lenin, Anatoli Lunacharsky delivered a report whose title sounds somewhat unusual today: "On the Offer by the Academy of Sciences of Scientific Services to Soviet Power in Studying the Natural Riches of the Country". The Academy had expressed its wish to cooperate and its readiness to take part in solving national economic problems.

We say that Lenin showed concern for the development of science. This is true, but a bit too generalized. In reality concern for science began with concern for scientists and for the solution of concrete problems. Lenin's signature stands under the decision of the Council of People's Commissars "On Conditions Ensuring the Scientific Work of Academician I. P. Pavlov and His Colleagues". In accordance with a similar decision, Nikolai Zhukovsky, the "father of Russian aviation", was released from the obligation to read lectures, was given a high salary and a prize in his honour was instituted. A decision was passed to publish his works. Under that document, too, the signature was "V. Ulyanov (Lenin)".

In August 1918 in the interests of "bringing science and technology closer to the practice of



production", the Soviet government set up a scientific and technical department under the Supreme Economic Council<sup>1</sup> which became the centre for coordinating applied scientific and technical work in industry. A direct part in establishing this department was taken by Lenin.

The work of the new department and also the "Draft Plan of Scientific and Technical Work" made it possible to establish a fast pace of research and to train scientific personnel as required by the national economy. Experience had shown that to reach a high level of scientific and technical progress called for the active participation of the state in the organization of scientific work.

**Taking account  
of the achievements  
of world science**

The beginning of the 20th century witnessed a search for new forms of organization of scientific work.

Establishing new relationships between the state and science, the Soviet government supported the most progressive trends in the organization of research and set about establishing research institutes.

Before the revolution there were no such institutes in Russia. In 1918 and 1919, 33 institutes were founded, among them the state roentgenological, radiological, and optical centres, hydrological, ceramics and central aerohydrodynamic institutes, institutes of physico-chemical analysis, applied chemistry and others. They tackled central problems decisive for the development of science.

By 1923, 55 research institutes had been established and by 1927, more than 90.

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<sup>1</sup> The central body for managing the country's industry in 1917-32.

These research institutes were headed by outstanding Russian scientists. Vladimir Vernadsky, who was appointed director of the Radium Institute in 1922, was about 60 at the time. A full member of the Imperial Academy of Sciences since 1906, he enjoyed world renown as a natural scientist, mineralogist and crystallographer. He was among the first scientists in the world to understand the tremendous potential in the discovery of radioactivity. In Soviet times he formulated the basic principles of geochemistry and biogeochemistry.

Vernadsky did not immediately recognize the new government, but having accepted it, he became one of its most active supporters in the scientific community. He was the first president of the Ukrainian Academy of Sciences, founded in Soviet times. In recognition of his services in the development of science he was among the first Soviet scientists who was made Hero of Socialist Labour.<sup>1</sup> Today institutes and streets bear his name. In 1980 in Moscow, on the way from the Olympic Village to the numerous stadiums, swimming pools and other sports installations, the participants in the 22nd Summer Olympic Games invariably passed through one of Moscow's most beautiful thoroughfares, the Vernadsky Prospekt. •

Physicist Abram Ioffe was the first head of the State Roentgenological, Radiological and Physico-Technical Institute. After graduating from the St.Petersburg Technological Institute in 1902, he went to Germany and worked in the Physical Institute of Munich University together with the founder of roentgenology, Wilhelm Roentgen. After returning home in 1905 he began to teach at the St.Petersburg Polytechnical Institute. In 1918, he

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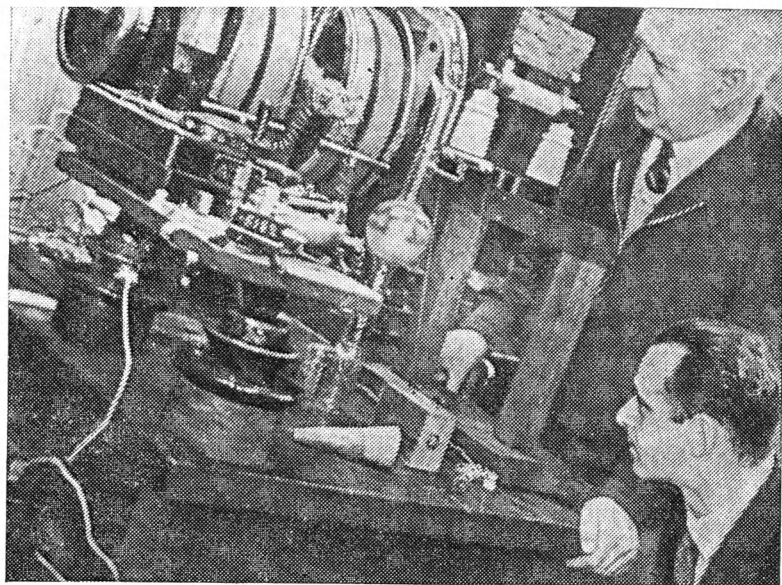
<sup>1</sup> The country's highest award for outstanding work.

was elected a full member of the Russian Academy of Sciences. This could have only happened after the revolution. Until that time there had been no instances of election of Jews to the Academy.

Abram Ioffe was among the first to understand the importance of the 1917 Revolution for the development of science. Scientific research had always been his prime interest in life. But its social importance had little concern for him. When the revolution placed science at the service of society, he began to treat it as part of the foundation of social transformation. The Physico-Technical Institute he had headed for almost 30 years is justly regarded as a major centre of physical research. Ioffe was also the founder of the Soviet science and technology of semiconductors. Like Vernadsky, he was Hero of Socialist Labour; posthumously he was awarded a Lenin Prize, the country's highest award for outstanding achievements in science and technology.

In the first post-revolutionary years major scientific centres, the State Institute of Experimental Agronomy and the All-Union Institute of Applied Botany and New Crops, were headed by Nikolai Vavilov, one of the youngest Russian scientists at the time. At the age of 32 he formulated the law of homological series in hereditary variability, which received world-wide recognition as a remarkable achievement of young Soviet science. An outstanding botanist, geneticist and a traveller, the first president of the All-Union (USSR) Academy of Agricultural Sciences and president of the USSR Geographical Society, Vavilov was one of the first five scientists to be awarded a Lenin Prize in the year it was instituted.

The first Soviet scientific research institutes worked in different areas, but they all had one



*Academician Abram Ioffe (1880-1960), one of the founders of the Soviet school of physics and initiator of physico-technical institutes in different cities of the country (centre).*



*Academician Nikolai Vavilov (1887-1943), the founder of the modern theory of the biological foundations of plant breeding. The first president of the All-Union (USSR) Academy of Agricultural Sciences (1929-35).*

feature in common: they took into consideration the achievements of world science, its best organizational forms.

The creation of the Soviet system of management of science and scientific personnel, the organization of a state-run system of scientific institutions constituted a great gain for the socialist revolution.

**How Lenin "succumbed to a Utopia"**

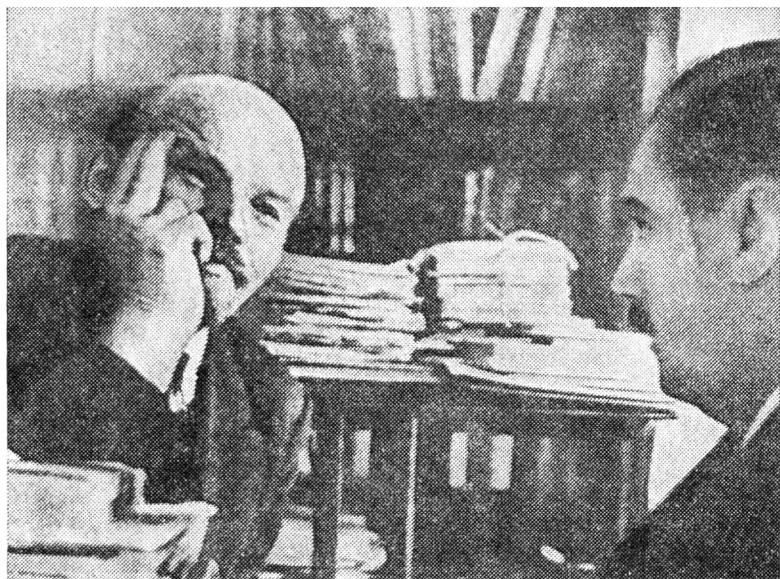
Tsarist Russia suffered from a shortage of a number of minerals and had to import large quantities of raw materials. Though it possessed vast natural resources they had barely been explored.

At the end of the last century Russian chemist Dmitri Mendeleev, who discovered the Periodic Law of atomic weights of chemical elements, wrote that almost the whole of the Russian industry was based on the processing of minerals and noted bitterly that, while possessing much greater reserves of coal than Britain, Russia not only failed to export it, but had to import certain amounts. The situation with oil and many other minerals was the same.

As with many other things, the systematic study of the country's natural wealth started after the revolution.

In particular, exploration began at Kara-Bogaz-Gol, a shallow gulf in the Caspian Sea, a huge source of Glauber salt and sulphates. The study of potassium deposits was started in the Perm Region. Geological expeditions went to the North to look for oil.

Special mention should be made of the study of the Kursk Magnetic Anomaly, the country's largest

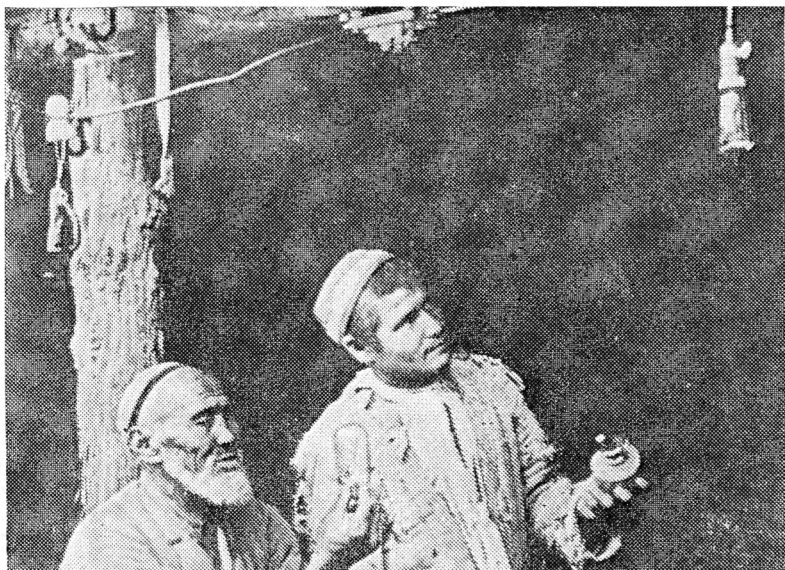


*Vladimir Lenin and H.G. Wells. During their meeting in October 1920 the head of the Soviet government told the British writer about the first long-term plan for the country's economic development—the electrification plan. Wells did not believe that this plan was feasible in the ravaged Russia of the time.*

iron ore deposit situated in the centre of the European part of the country.

An unstable position of the compass needle had been noticed there more than a hundred years ago. It was suggested that the magnetic needle was influenced by vast amounts of iron lying underground. However, such reports failed to rouse the interest of the tsarist government, while the efforts of individuals and small private companies were not sufficient to assess the deposit correctly.

In the autumn of 1918, Academician Pyotr Lazarev was instructed to study the Kursk Mag-



*The electrification plan, calculated for 10-15 years, was completed by 1931. Thirty electric power stations with an aggregate capacity of 1.5 million kw were built. Electricity even came to villages in the national borderlands.*

netic Anomaly. The first results were encouraging and the Soviet government acknowledged this work as having special importance.

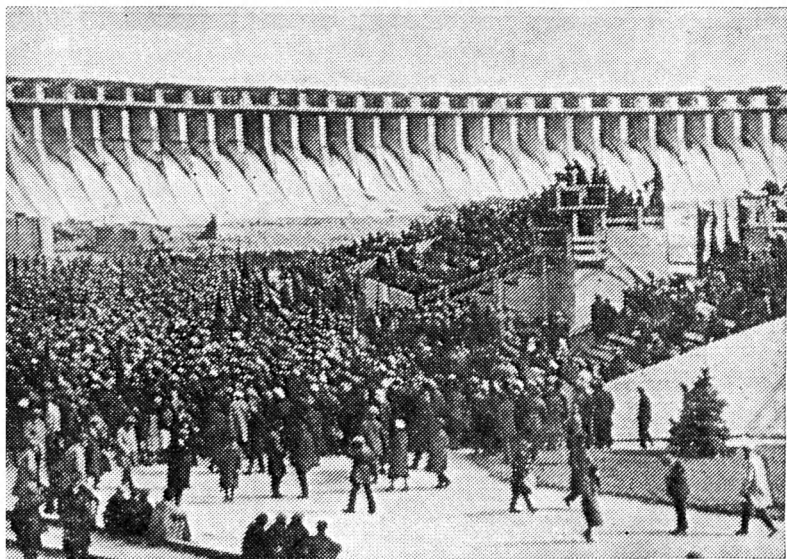
In the spring of 1922, having received a report that data had been obtained of rich deposits of iron ore near Kursk, Lenin suggested that an additional check-up be conducted.

"If the report... confirms that the matter is serious," he wrote, "we must get the work going as fast as possible, without in any case stinting the necessary gold appropriations, and establishing special supervision to have the necessary equipment received from abroad (diamond, drilling, etc.) with the maximum speed... We have there

almost surely a stock of wealth unequalled anywhere in the world, and capable of revolutionizing the whole of metallurgy."

In 1923, samples of iron ore were obtained from depths greater than 150 metres. Their quality proved to be poor. Only four years later, as if in reward for their persistence, geologists reached stocks of ore containing up to 65 per cent of iron.

Yet the most vivid example of the pooling of efforts by foremost representatives of science and technology for the solution of long-term tasks of development of the national economy was the establishment and work of the State Commission for the Electrification of Russia, abbreviated in Russian as GOELRO. It united about 200 eminent scientists



*The 650-megawatt Dnieper Hydropower Station built under the electrification plan was the world's largest in its time. On photo: the meeting on May 1, 1932, to celebrate the commissioning of the station.*





*Georgi Baidukov, Valeri Chkalov and Alexander Belyakov (left to right), the Soviet airmen who made a world record-breaking non-stop flight in June 1937 aboard the civil plane ANT-25.*

and technical specialists. Headed by Gleb Krzhizhansky, a highly-qualified engineer, the commission drew up a plan in 1922 for the electrification of Russia.

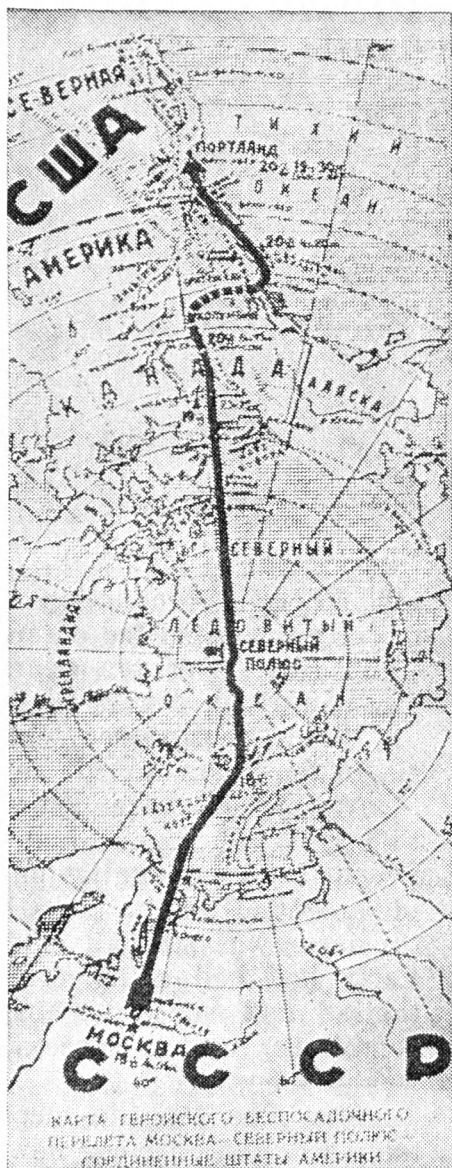
The plan was so bold that even such an outstanding science-fiction writer as H. G. Wells did not believe in its feasibility. He arrived in Russia in the autumn of 1920 and had a talk with Lenin. Later, in a book with a characteristic title, *Russia in the Shadows*, he wrote:

"...Lenin, who like a good orthodox Marxist denounces all 'Utopians', has succumbed at last to a Utopia, the Utopia of the electricians... I cannot see anything of the sort happening in this dark

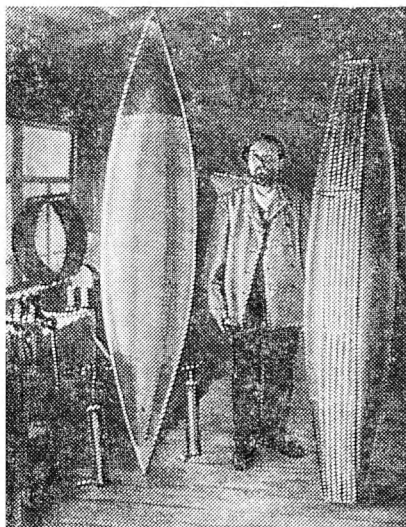
crystal of Russia.”

Who was right became clear pretty soon. Already by 1925, the Kashira, Shatura, Red October (Leningrad) and other electric power stations were put into operation, and the first hydropower station on the Volkhov River was commissioned. Industrial output reached about 75 per cent of the 1913 level. The restoration of agricultural production was nearing completion.

By the end of the 1930s the Soviet Union had joined the ranks of the most highly developed countries of the world. In 1937 the gross output of large-scale industry was 8 times, and electricity production, 20 times that of 1913. More than 80 per cent of



*The map of the ANT-25's flight from Moscow via the North Pole to Vancouver (USA). The flight lasted more than 63 hours, its route was 8,500 kilometres long.*



*Konstantin Tsiolkovsky (1857-1935), the founder of modern cosmonautics. He proved the possibility of using rockets for interplanetary flights, indicated rational ways of developing rocketry and worked out important engineering solutions for the design of rockets and liquid-fuel jet engines.*

all industrial production was contributed by new or fully reconstructed enterprises.

A little over ten years had passed since the day Lenin talked with Wells.

"Come back to see what we have done in Russia in ten years' time," he had said to Wells.

And Wells came. What he saw compelled him to admit that Lenin had kindled in the Russian people such unflagging enthusiasm for the accomplishment of all the tasks before them that this enthusiasm was still alive. Although the Communist Party had had no experience, he wrote, it nevertheless had succeeded in creating the necessary conditions for the success of the experiment that was under way.

The plan for the electrification of Russia established qualitatively new principles of managing the economy on the basis of scientifically-founded statewide planning. It became the first long-term economic plan of the USSR.

The establishment of a scientific basis began in the traditional industrial and cultural centres. But even the most backward borderlands were not ignored. This, of course, considerably complicated the general task and required large appropriations. But the direct and indirect benefits were obvious. Such an approach greatly extended the overall potential of Soviet science and contributed to the development of the creative activity of the entire population. Thus Academician Maltsev's agro-technical centre in Kazakhstan came into being, Academician Ambartsumyan's astronomical observatory in Byurakan (Armenia) and the institutes of the Siberian branch of the USSR Academy of Sciences near Novosibirsk (Western Siberia).

The direction of scientific research in the provinces was first of all determined by the local geographical conditions. For instance, in Byelorussia marshlands were the most pressing problem, while in Central Asia, it was irrigation. Hence there appeared a marshlands institute in Minsk, the capital of Byelorussia, and a hydrotechnical institute in the Uzbek capital, Tashkent.

The formation of scientific trends in the republics and the training of national scientific personnel were greatly influenced by the expeditions of the Academy of Sciences to Yakutia and Buryat-Mongolia and the work of the Special Committee for the Study of the Union and Autonomous Republics established by the USSR Academy of Sciences in 1926.

The Soviet government gave substantial help to self-educated scientists, who could not receive recognition in tsarist Russia. Special attention was given to Ivan Michurin's work in breeding new fruit varieties. In 1923 the USSR Agricultural Exhibition awarded the top prize to him, and in 1925,

by a decree of the Soviet government, his nursery garden was recognized as a scientific institution of national importance.

Only after the revolution was the work of the outstanding scientist, the father of cosmonautics, Konstantin Tsiolkovsky, recognized. A modest school teacher from the Russian town of Kaluga, he was given a large state pension, enabling him to concentrate wholly on scientific research and to complete, in the latter half of the 1920s, the theoretical foundations of the exploration of outer space.

The launching, on October 4, 1957, of the world's first man-made earth satellite was a testament to Tsiolkovsky's ideas. On that day not only specialists like Professor Oberth understood that mankind's age-old dream of breaking through to outer space was nearing realization. Many, like Oberth, considered that the first spaceman would be a Russian.

They were not mistaken.

# From the old to the new

## **Succession and continuity**

It is not in one's power to select one's inheritance. But everyone has the right to accept or reject the gift. Something of this sort, although in a much more complex way, happens to inheritance in the field of culture.

Each new generation succeeds to the spiritual achievements of its forefathers. Much of what mankind has created in the course of history is admired to this day.

The Soviet state inherited and was to use, as Lenin noted, everything that had been created by mankind in the past. Therefore, the culture of the new society was to become a natural development of hitherto accumulated stocks of knowledge.

That is why illiterate workers and peasants in hungry Russia, isolated from the rest of the world by an economic and political blockade established by civilized bourgeois countries, took great care to preserve everything that had become their cultural heritage.

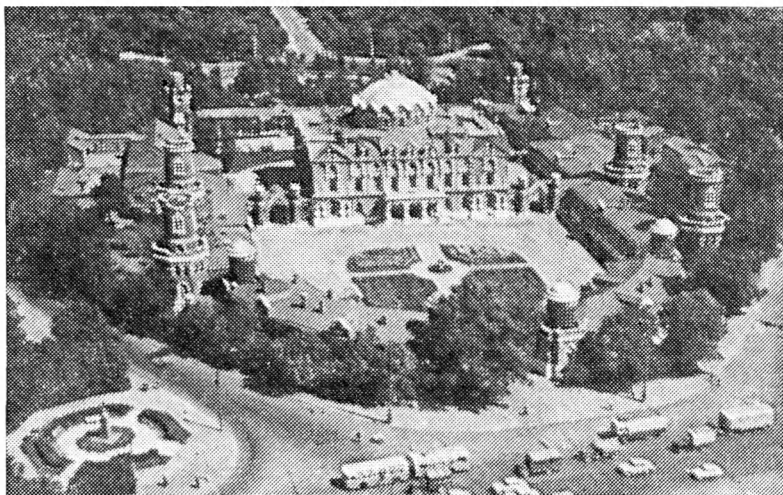
In those years world reaction predicted the inevitable doom of Russian culture. In 1921

historian Mikhail Pokrovsky, replying to the predictions of Pavel Milyukov, a prominent bourgeois historian, public figure and Foreign Minister in the first Provisional Government, noted:

“In reality the paradox of the Russian revolution consists precisely in the fact that this most democratic of all revolutions in history has hit the masses strongest, more or less sparing the top. It must be admitted that we are very badly off for people’s schools and teachers, but the universities are still holding out, and the university professors’ diet is better than that of any other category of ‘educational workers’. Not all of us have shoes, but the Hermitage became, during and thanks to the revolution, the world’s first treasure house of art after the Louvre and the Vatican. You won’t even get a mustard plaster in the pharmacy, but in the years of the revolution there appeared in Petrograd a roentgenological institute which foreign scientists consider to be one of the best in Europe. It is precisely ‘higher’ culture that is still holding out in our country. Some day monuments to the Russian proletarian will be erected in front of both the Academy of Sciences and the Academy of Arts precisely because, so far removed by his wretched past from science and the arts, he prevented, in critical moments, these hothouse plants, rare in our country and utterly alien to him, from perishing, and while himself suffering hunger and cold, warmed and nursed them for future generations.”

**Traditions  
and innovation**

In cold, snow-bound Petrograd the esteemed Russian composer, Alexander Glazunov, paid attention to a gifted boy whose music sounded different from anything he had heard be-



*The Petrovsky Palace in Moscow, a former out-of-town castle in which Russian tsars stopped on their way from St. Petersburg to their coronation in Moscow. Built in 1775-1782, the project of Russian architect Matvei Kazakov, it is protected by the government as a valuable architectural monument.*

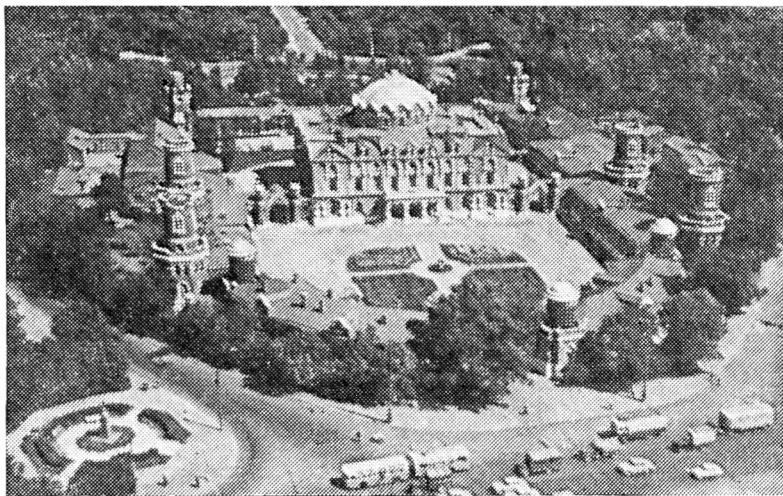
fore. The boy was undoubtedly talented and Glazunov saw in him the future of musical culture in Russia. He did everything he could to support him.

At Glazunov's request the famous writer Maxim Gorky managed to get the special ration allotted for scientists and cultural workers for this young musician. The boy would come for it pulling a sled, not missing a single hillock to slide down along the way.

The boy's name was Dmitri. His family name requires no introductory words today—Shostakovich.

Thus the traditional, recognized trend in music came together with an innovatory one, not always clear and understandable even to such professionals





*Soviet cultural figures of the 1920s (left to right): composer Dmitri Shostakovich, poet Vladimir Mayakovsky, stage-director Vsevolod Meyerhold, and graphic artist for theatre and cinema, Alexander Rodchenko.*

as Glazunov, but a trend born of life itself, of the revolution. The weight of tradition did not prevent Glazunov from supporting Shostakovich's innovatory music.

Support for the new was typical of everything in post-revolutionary Russia. And yet one can still hear in the West the charge that in building a new culture Soviet society has always given preference to traditional forms, canonizing the old. Is this really so?

Revolution is incompatible with canonization. It allows full scope for creative experiment. Respect for masterpieces of the past, their careful preservation and study only helped to move forward, while blind worship of them invariably engendered

bigotry, and true artists had always been opposed to this.

While coming out for the preservation of the masterpieces of the past, Anatoli Lunacharsky protested against attempts to stop the search for new ways and forms in art. He said in one of his speeches:

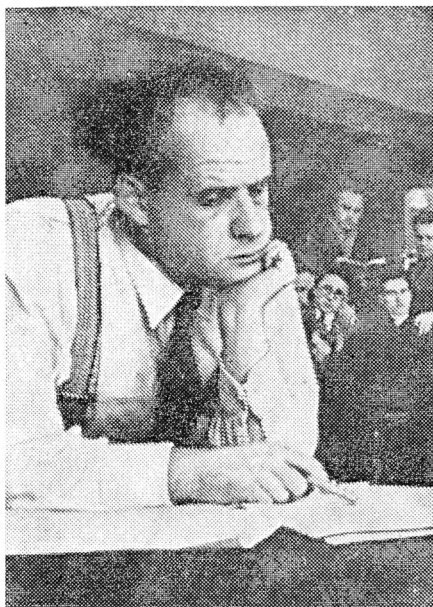
"One must not allow one trend, armed with acquired traditional glory or fashionable success, to wipe out another!"

Explaining this aspect of the new state's policy in culture, the People's Commissar for Public Education justly noted:

"We have all too often seen in mankind's history how fussily fashion pushed forward something new, seeking to turn the old into ruins as soon as possible, and how bitterly the next generation wept over beauty's ruins, scornfully passing over the recent princelings of transient glory. All too often have we seen the opposite as well..."

Guided by this understanding of continuity, the Soviet government opposed both the attempts to cross out the culture of the past and the sweeping negation of everything counter to established concepts. Only in this way was it possible to ensure the development of the new art and new culture, an organic unity of tradition and innovation.

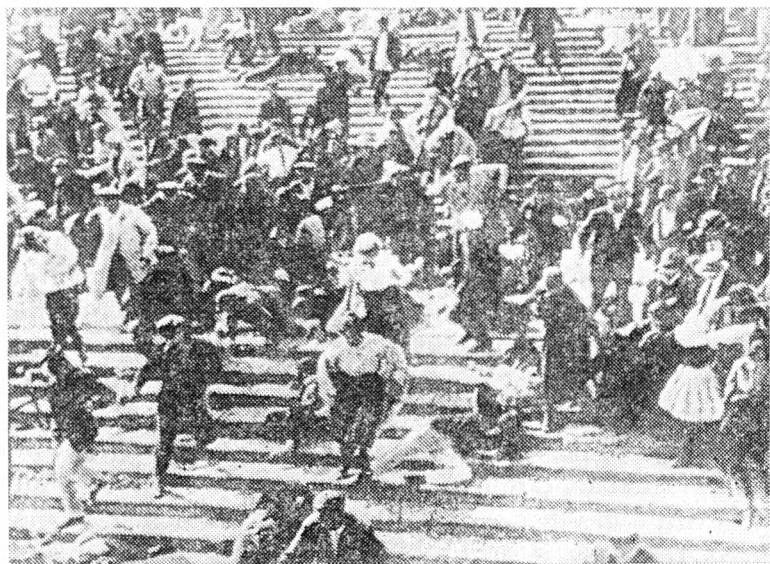
In early 1919 the Hermitage arranged the first post-revolutionary exhibition of Western European art. Included were works by Monet, Pissarro, Sisley, Gauguin, Cézanne, Matisse, Picasso, and other paintings from private collections which had been nationalized and turned over to the Hermitage. Previously the department of 19th and 20th century art in the museum had been represented by one or two artists. Many were against showing works of modern art to the masses, considering that the



*Sergei Eisenstein (1898-1948), Doctor of Art, Soviet film-director and film-theorist. His films greatly influenced the development of world cinematography.*

people, strangers to the artistic life of the cultured strata of society, would be unable to accept modern art right away and should be introduced to it gradually, through the assimilation of preceding stages in the evolution of art. Representatives of the Fine Arts Department of the People's Commissariat of Public Education objected: "This is reminiscent of the argument that people are not mature enough for a commune and should first go through a constitutional monarchy, a democratic republic, and so on."

In the past, no doubt, some people too regarded the fancifulness of baroque art as complicated. It is not always easy for hut-dwellers to understand the craftsmanship of palace builders, but it is absurd to infer from this that they are unable to appreciate beauty.



*A sequence from Eisenstein's film "Battleship Potemkin": the shooting of a peaceful demonstration on the Odessa steps. In this film about the mutiny of Russian sailors in 1905, Eisenstein showed for the first time in world cinema the revolutionary masses as the driving force of history.*

Artists of all tendencies took an active part in the artistic life of the first years of the revolution: former advocates of "pure art", realists, and avant-garde artists. The history of Soviet art knows the names of Boris Kustodiyev, Sergei Chekhonin, Robert Falk, David Shterenberg, Vladimir Tatlin, Kazimir Malevich, Vasili Kandinsky, Marc Chagall, and others.

"The revolution is bold," Lunacharsky wrote in this connection. "It is fond of brightness. Tradition as such, does not bound it, and therefore it willingly accepts those extensions of realism which in essence are entirely in its domain."

Striving to assert the art of socialist realism, the new society assimilated all the achievements of form, technique, colour, speech and sound.

Today hardly anyone will deny the innovatory nature of the work of Sergei Eisenstein, who discovered the profundity of cinema language and its psychological impact. His film *Battleship Potemkin* about the sailors' mutiny in 1905 created a new screen hero and was truly a new word in form and content. The dramatic pitch and grandeur of the struggle for freedom shook the spectator. The precision of the montage, the psychologically justified close-ups and the clarity of every sequence served the fullest exposition of the theme. *Battleship Potemkin* turned cinematography from a means of entertainment into art. It is not accidental that this film is recognized as first among the ten best films of all times and all peoples.

The spirit of innovation characterized other spheres of creative activity as well. In architecture there were El Lisitsky's projects of "horizontal skyscrapers", the constructivist ensembles of public buildings and residences designed by the Vesnin brothers, by Ivan Leonidov and Konstantin Melnikov.

However, innovation was never an end in itself. It was aimed at ensuring that the arts and culture as a whole should play an active role in the revolutionary transformation of life.

**Is the artist free  
under socialism?**

From its very inception the culture of Soviet society reflected everything that was

being done in Russia to transform political, economic and intellectual life. Moreover, literature, the fine arts and architecture became an important component of progressive changes that were under



*"1918 in Petrograd", a painting by Kuzma Petrov-Vodkin (1878-1939). In this symbolic image of a mother, the painter makes use of the traditions of Russian religious art and the picture came to be called "The Petrograd Madonna".*

way in the country. The close connection of Soviet culture with the life of the people was its distinguishing feature and made real its artistic and moral ideals.

In all periods of Soviet history—during the revolution and Civil War, industrialization of the country and collectivization of agriculture, in the years of struggle against fascism, which sought to enslave the USSR, and after the war—art and culture actively asserted everything new that life brought forth, rejecting the old and the routine.

From the very first days of the revolution artists did not merely dream of a kingdom of freedom and

justice but strove to describe the historic change that was being accomplished before their very eyes by the workers and peasants of Russia. Thus there appeared the canvases *Bolshevik* by Boris Kustodiyev, *The New Planet* by Konstantin Yuon, *1918 in Petrograd* by Kuzma Petrov-Vodkin. Travelling through different fronts during the Civil War Mitrofan Grekov painted a series of battle scenes glorifying the defenders of the October Revolution.

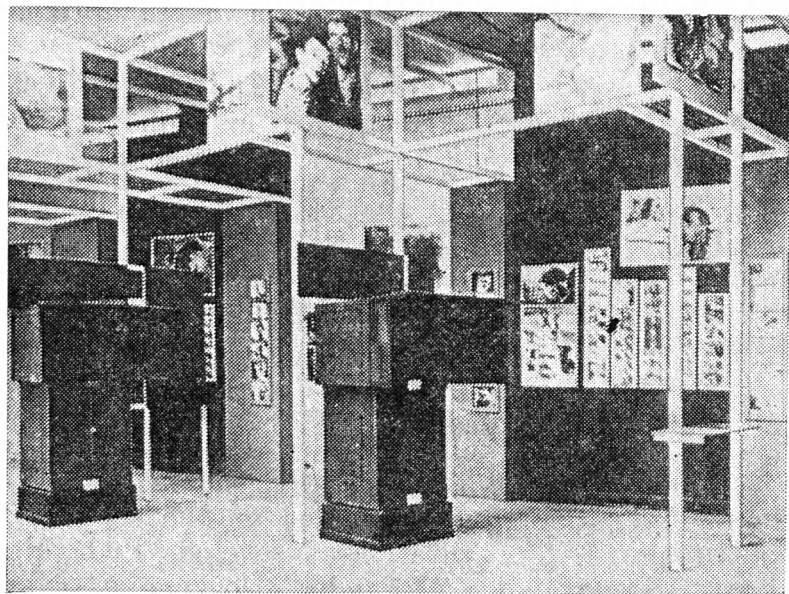
Maxim Gorky, the founder of proletarian literature, was the first in world literature to people his books with revolutionary workers. His novels, stories and plays asserted the historic inevitability of socialist revolution, widely portrayed Russian life and described the ideological struggle and public life of the pre-revolutionary decades.

In the mid-twenties there appeared such novels as *The Iron Torrent* by Alexander Serafimovich, *Chapayev* and *Mutiny* by Dmitri Furmanov, Isaak Babel's *The Cavalry Army*, and Vsevolod Ivanov's *Partisan Stories*, books which vividly reflected the heroism of Soviet people in years of the Civil War and intervention.

On the other hand, Fyodor Gladkov's *Cement* was one of the first books to describe the rehabilitation of the national economy, while Lidiya Seifullina's *Humus* and *Virineya* were devoted to the life of the countryside. Extremely popular with the public were the works of other Soviet writers, such as Mikhail Sholokhov, Konstantin Fedin, Viki Kenti Veresayev, Mikhail Bulgakov, Alexander Grin, Mikhail Zoshchenko and Leonid Leonov.

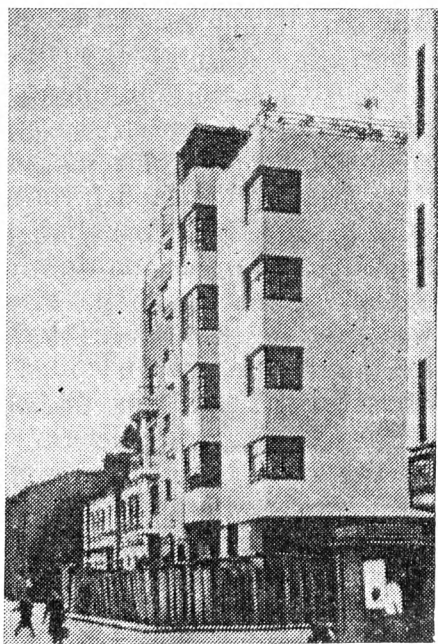
The poetry of the revolutionary epoch is closely associated with the name of Vladimir Mayakovsky. His *Revolutionary Ode*, *Left March* and other poems not only glorified the revolution, but for the first





*El Lisitsky, Soviet architect, painter and graphic artist (1890-1941). He elaborated new principles of exhibition premises. On photo: one of the halls at the "Film and Photo" exhibition (Stuttgart, 1929) which was arranged by El Lisitsky.*

*An apartment house in Moscow designed by Soviet architect Moisei Ginzburg (1892-1946). In his works Ginzburg designed new types of houses and introduced innovative elements in equipment and amenities (built-in furniture, roof gardens, etc.).*





time gave poetic expression to the depth of revolutionary transformations.

In January 1918 Alexander Blok, one of the foremost poets of Russia, finished his famous poem *The Twelve*, a hymn to the revolution sweeping out the old world.

The search for a form explicable to millions while using all the technical achievements of pre-revolutionary literature can be seen in the work of all foremost writers of that period.

As we have mentioned, the birth of the Soviet art of cinematography is associated with the name of the outstanding film director Sergei Eisenstein. Together with him the new themes and the new hero of the times were depicted on the screen by the talented film directors Vsevolod Pudovkin, Yakov Protazanov, Alexander Dovzhenko, Yuri Zhelyabuzhsky, Lev Kuleshov, Ilya Perestiani, Amo Bek-Nazarov, and others.

In the spring of 1918 the Soviet government ordered that all monuments in honour of tsars and their servitors which were of no artistic value be removed from squares and streets. At the same time Lenin suggested forming an authoritative commission to draw up a list of prominent revolutionary theoreticians, fighters and outstanding workers in science and the arts. The new monuments were to be erected in the places most frequented by the public. Lenin's idea was that the unveiling of each of them was to become a festive occasion with speeches and literary and musical performances.

Lenin's suggestions were realized in the decree of the Council of People's Commissars "On the Republic's Monuments". That was the birth of Lenin's plan of monumental propaganda.

Art began to come out into the streets. Painters, sculptors and architects joined forces to create the city's new aesthetic look.

The power of the working people proclaimed: "Our squares and dwellings should be made beautiful and convenient for all."

The task was set of broadening squares and streets, increasing the number of public gardens, parks, museums, stadiums, etc.

Of course, the republic was short of funds for all this. But nevertheless already in the first post-revolutionary years spacious squares appeared in all the large cities. Attractive administrative and public buildings were being erected. The tree-lined streets gladdened the eye with their cleanness. People saw that their dreams were coming true. But a war even more destructive and ruthless than all they had ever known already stood on the threshold.

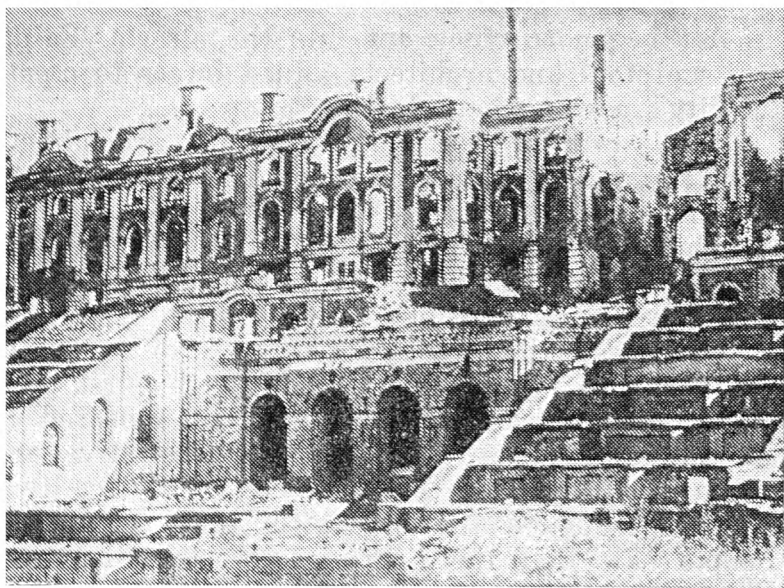
As they were entering the fifth decade of the 20th century the Soviet people did not know that Hitler, the ruler of nazi Germany, had already signed the Barbarossa plan outlining the perfidious attack on the world's first socialist country.

#### **Years of trials**

There were 1,418 days and nights of incessant fierce fighting, unparalleled in all human history for its scale of hostilities, its area and the number of armies involved.

The nazis brought blood and death, charred ruins and vandalism to the peoples whom they enslaved. The atrocities they committed were particularly rabid on Soviet soil.

Hitler proclaimed that the main task was the complete destruction of everything that had been created in Russia as a result of the revolution. He



*Ruins of the Grand Fountain Cascade and the Grand Palace after the liberation of Peterhof (now Petrodvorets) from nazi invaders in 1944 during the Great Patriotic War of 1941-45. In all, the invaders ransacked and turned into rubble 1,710 cities and more than 70,000 villages on Soviet territory occupied by them.*

sought to wipe living socialism off the face of the earth, briefly calling it "Bolshevism".<sup>1</sup>

Even before the treacherous attack on the USSR, in March 1941, Hitler called for the merciless destruction of Bolsheviks and Bolshevism

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<sup>1</sup> Bolsheviks--the supporters of the Leninist orientation who received the majority (*bolshinstvo* in Russian) of votes at the election to the Party's central organs at the 2nd Party Congress in 1903. The opportunists found themselves in the minority (*menshinstvo*) and became known as Mensheviks. In 1917-52 the word Bolsheviks formed part of the Party's name. Since 1952 the Party has been called the Communist Party of the Soviet Union.



*The Great Patriotic War lasted 1,418 days. Soviet people prevented nazi Germany from destroying the world's first socialist state built by them. They lost 20 millions lives.*

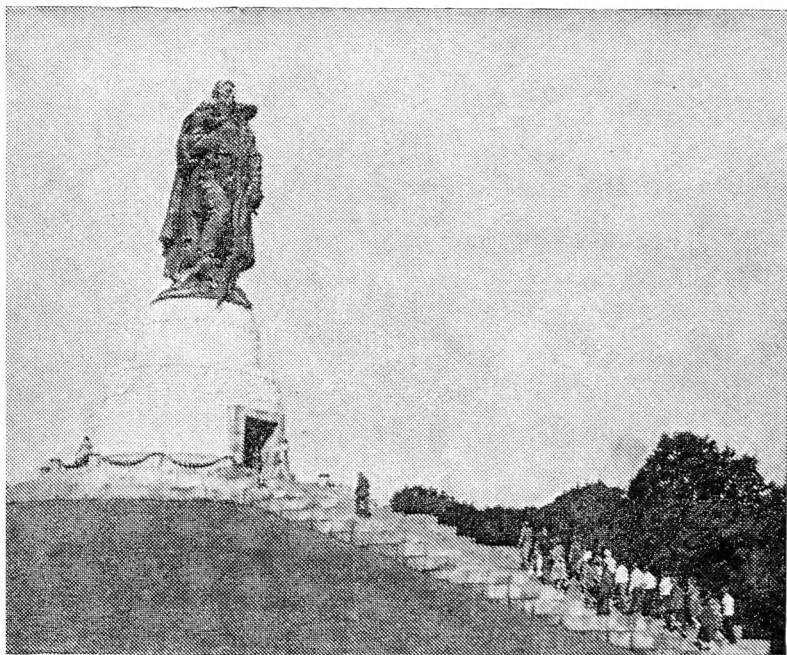
and justified the brutal treatment of the Soviet people and the trampling underfoot of the fruits of their labour:

“The sentence to exterminate Bolshevism is not a social crime. . . This war will differ sharply from the war in the West. In the East, cruelty itself is good for the future.”

And the nazi leaders urged their soldiers:

“Beat! Hang! Destroy! You will not be called to account! There is no social crime in this. You are carrying out the sentence of extermination of Bolshevism.”

That was how Hitler defined the gist of the war with the Soviet Union, stressing the uncompromising nature of the struggle between two oppos-



*This monument to the Soviet soldier, the liberator of many peoples of Europe from nazi slavery, stands in Berlin's Treptow Park.*

ing social systems, two ideologies, two ways of life.

It is worth noting that Hitler was well aware of the role of culture in this struggle.

"The struggle against Russia," he said, "is the destruction of the Bolshevik commissars and the communist intelligentsia..."

He regarded the commissars and the Soviet intelligentsia as the principal ideological danger.

It was noted in the special order "On the Conduct of Troops in the East" that no historical or artistic works in the East were of any importance.

Fascism encroached on the Soviet peoples' past, on the wealth of their culture.

Whereas in the first year of the revolution the ignorant Russian peasants understood the importance of preserving the house of the great writer Leo Tolstoy in Yasnaya Polyana, the soldiers of Hitler's General Guderian turned it into a barracks. The nazis sacked the house of the composer Peter Tchaikovsky in Klin, which had been declared the property of the people in 1918. They desecrated and mined the tomb of the genius of Russian poetry, Alexander Pushkin, sacred to many generations of grateful mankind.

The fascists blew up the world-famous cathedrals in Kiev and Novgorod and palaces on the outskirts of Leningrad. On temporarily occupied Soviet territory they plundered 427 museums, shipping the most valuable exhibits to Germany. Many unique books were destroyed. Among them were the Grand Koran from the Khan's Mosque in Bakhchisarai, the Crimea, and the handwritten Koran from the Yevpatoria Mosque also in the Crimea.

In this way they tried to erase the memory of the past from people's minds. A people who forgot their history and culture would be easier to turn into obedient labour power.

But the nazis did not only destroy cultural monuments of the past. They smashed with particular vehemence everything that was connected with the culture of the new society. They razed about 84,000 schools and higher educational establishments, thousands of libraries and club houses, and 605 scientific centres.

The Soviet Union was deprived of 30 per cent of its national wealth. There is no way of enumerating everything destroyed by the enemy. No figure can accurately illustrate the magnitude of the harm done to the Soviet people during the

Great Patriotic War against fascist Germany. Statistics cannot estimate the vast labour and talent which over the centuries were invested in the creation of works of material and cultural value, that the Hitlerites destroyed.

One can raze hundreds of cities, burn millions of books, smash museums and plunder works of art. But one cannot destroy the culture of a freedom-loving people. One cannot enslave a people who regard as sacred their right to be successors to all the achievements of their national culture created over the centuries, who see works of art as an expression of their loftiest spiritual ideals.

This was convincingly proved by the Soviet Union's victory in the Great Patriotic War.

As early as the first months of fighting the Soviet Army frustrated Hitler's "lightning war" plan. The battle of Moscow, which began in December 1941, dispelled the myth about the invincibility of the Wehrmacht. In the gigantic battles of Stalin-grad, the Kursk Bulge, in the left-bank Ukraine and on the Dnieper in 1942-43, the Soviet armed forces brought about a cardinal turning-point not only in their Great Patriotic War, but in the course of the entire Second World War. In 1944, they carried out a number of major strategic operations and liberated almost the whole Soviet territory occupied at the beginning of the war. During the final stages the Soviet command conducted large-scale offensive operations simultaneously on the entire thousand-kilometre Soviet-German front from the Baltic Sea to the Carpathians, as a result of which the German army suffered a stunning defeat. The Soviet Army liberated many European countries from the yoke of nazi oppression.

The war ended where it had started—in Berlin,

liberated by the Soviet troops, where, on May 9, 1945, the act of unconditional surrender was signed.

The rout of Hitler's hordes not only prevented the physical annihilation of the majority of mankind by fascism but made impossible the realization of the Nazis' maniacal plans for enslaving peoples, blotting out their history and destroying their culture.

The victory restored the future to the peoples. Thanks to the efforts of the Soviet Union the countries which embarked upon socialist construction after the war, many developing countries and all progressive peace-loving forces, the peoples of Europe—a continent which has been the arena of two world wars—have now lived in peace for 36 years. Much is being done to extinguish or prevent so-called local wars which still flare up in different parts of the world.

The time has come when it is possible to carry into life the boldest designs of those who made the revolution and upheld its conquests. The role of culture in settling the major issues of our times keeps growing.



# Unity without uniformity

## **An excursion to Yerevan**

Several years ago we had the opportunity to take part in an international meeting of historians which was held in Yerevan, the capital of the Armenian Soviet Socialist Republic, one of the fifteen independent national republics making up the USSR.

One of us, whose mother was born in Armenia, flew from Moscow a day before. The son of a teacher from the Smolensk region in the centre of Russia and of an Armenian woman from the far-away village of Der on the border with Iran, he knew the language and history of Armenia, its literature and ancient culture from childhood.

He wanted to meet his friend in the Yerevan airport at the moment when the first rays of the sun touched the double-peaked Ararat, particularly majestic and beautiful in those hours. He wanted to open out before his friend a city unknown to him, rose-coloured because of the tufa, the local building material of volcanic origin, to lead him along the impressive, 75-metre-high arc bridge over the Razdan river, to show him the ingenious national architectural monuments.

Much can be told about the ancient land of Nairi which blossomed out on the territory of the Armenian Upland in the middle of the 8th century B.C.; about the rich Hellenistic culture of the Armenian cities; about the enslavement and partition of the country between Persia and Byzantium in the 4th century A.D.; about the adoption of Christianity by the Armenians in the early 4th century A.D.; about how the monk Mesrop Mashtots created, in 405, an Armenian alphabet and how the written Armenian language began to spread, about the opening of schools giving instruction in the native language, the blossoming out of literature and the arts, and the emergence of a whole galaxy of translators, writers, historiographers, philosophers, mathematicians and geographers.

To really comprehend the destiny of the Armenian people, one perhaps has to see with one's own eyes the local mountains, the twisting mountain roads, the picturesque gorges, the beautiful Ararat Valley and the majestic mountain Lake Sevan. At every step one sees traces of the centuries of Armenia's struggle for freedom, for the very existence of the nation. Without seeing and knowing this one may not understand the importance and the progressive nature of the accession of East Armenia to Russia in the first quarter of the 19th century.

"Blessed be the hour when the Russians entered upon our radiant soil," wrote the great Armenian enlightener Khachatur Abovyan.

That is really so. Suffice it to recall that at the end of the 19th century the ruling top of Sultan's Turkey repeatedly organized massacres of hundreds of thousands of Armenians who had stayed on in West Turkey under the grim Turkish yoke. In the years of the First World War this policy assumed the form of outright genocide. About 1.5 million

Armenians perished in 1915-16 alone. As a result of the genocidal policy of the Turkish government, less than 200,000 out of the 2,660,000 Armenians living in Western Armenia in the 1890s survived. Fleeing physical destruction, part of the Armenian population was compelled to leave their native land and seek refuge in other countries.

Many Armenians living abroad were attracted by Soviet Armenia.

Already in the years preceding the Second World War, thanks to the disinterested assistance of the government of Soviet Russia, more than 200 large plants and factories were built in the republic, new industries appeared, a powerful energy base was set up. In 1940, industrial output was nearly 9 times the 1913 level. Agriculture also advanced rapidly. The network of educational establishments, libraries and other cultural institutions was extended. Illiteracy was wiped out. The material and cultural standards of the population rose. Science, culture and the arts were flourishing.

Schools in pre-revolutionary Yerevan had several hundred pupils. Today, the secondary schools alone are attended by 60,000 pupils. The city's higher schools have a student body of more than 30,000, training specialists in all lines for the republic's economy.

Yerevan is the seat of the Armenian Academy of Sciences with numerous research institutes and laboratories.

Yerevan has a busy musical and theatrical life. There are eight theatres and many cinemas. The local state conservatory has become a major musical centre.

There are 15 museums and hundreds of libraries. The treasures of the Matenadaran, the State



*Yerevan, capital of the Armenian Soviet Socialist Republic (population: 1,000,000). In Soviet years it has become a modern city, a major industrial and cultural centre of the republic (11 higher schools, 8 theatres, 15 museums).*

Depository of Ancient Manuscripts, are known the world over.

Yerevan's large publishing and printing houses put out not only works by Armenian authors and translations from other languages, but also textbooks in Armenian for the different schools and colleges in the republic.

And yet, why have we picked Yerevan and not, say, Tbilisi or Tashkent? Without doubt, any capital of a Union republic has the right to be described here—each is unique in its own way.

Yerevan is simply a typical example, reflecting

the achievements of the entire multinational Soviet people. The Armenian capital is in many ways similar to the capitals of the other Union republics: it develops according to a master plan; representatives of many nationalities live and work in it; Yerevan's economic and cultural upsurge took place in Soviet times.

**A feeling  
of belonging  
to one family**

While in Armenia, we recalled on more than one occasion the words of Pavlo Ty-china, an eminent Ukrainian

Soviet poet: "the feeling of belonging to one family".

This feeling manifests itself in many ways.

For example, Yerevan has a beautiful monument to David of Sasun, the hero of an Armenian epic, which was erected in the street in front of the railway terminal and became the symbol of the city. The 1,000th anniversary of the poem about the son of Sasun was celebrated as their own holiday by the residents of Moscow and Leningrad, Kiev and Minsk, Tashkent and Dushanbe—in all the corners of the country.

Soviet children are very fond of Ovanes Tuman-yan's fairy tale about the cat-furrier who cheated the trustful dog for whom he was to make a hat. They know it from the excellent Russian translation of Samuel Marshak.

Armenian poetry was translated into Russian by Alexander Blok and Osip Mandelshtam. Many Armenian writers of the post-revolutionary generation write with equal ease in both Armenian and Russian.

The equal status of all national languages was a basic principle of the nationalities policy from the very first years of Soviet power. No language

in the country was declared to be the state language. In keeping with the USSR Constitution, every citizen has the right to speak any language and to bring up and educate his children in any language. To prevent a "confusion of languages" the numerous nationalities of the country need one common language. For instance, Daghestan's 1.5 million people speak 27 languages and 70 dialects. The majority of the residents of this autonomous republic use Russian for communication among themselves. It is taught as a second language in schools, where initial instruction is done in the language of the local people, no matter how small.

In the Soviet Union Russian has long become the language of communication between the nationalities living there.

Moreover, to many peoples of the country Russian has provided access to world culture—to Homer, Shakespeare and Khayyam. People of many nationalities could first read the works of these authors in Russian.

But back to Armenia. Armenian music enjoys great popularity in the Soviet Union. Works by Komitas, Spendiarov, Khachaturyan and other Armenian composers are often heard over the radio in many parts of the country. They are performed by the best orchestras on TV and in the biggest concert halls, while Aram Khachaturyan's ballet *Spartacus* staged by the Bolshoi Theatre, is regarded as a major event in world theatre.

Paintings by the great Armenian artist Martiros Saryan are displayed at exhibitions devoted to him in the country's biggest art galleries and museums.

All this has become part of a culture common to all the nations and nationalities of the USSR, a

culture unique in its national colouring in every republic and region.

Soviet culture is truly a fusion of the spiritual achievements of all the peoples of the USSR and one of the most important results of the social, economic and cultural transformations that followed the victory of the revolution.

Today it is hard to imagine that there was a time when even educated people in Russia were ignorant of the rich culture of the nationalities living in their own country, who were scornfully called aliens. It is said that at the end of the last century the prominent Russian poet Konstantin Balmont, in a conversation with an Englishman, aboard an ocean liner steaming past the Canary Islands, learned from him about the existence in his country of the beautiful epic *The Knight in the Panther's Skin* by Shota Rustaveli, the great Georgian poet of the Middle Ages. It had not been translated into Russian. When he read the poem in an English translation, Balmont was so carried away with its music and its message that after returning to Russia he made the first Russian translation.

Somewhere in the middle of the 19th century Vissarion Belinsky, the great Russian literary critic and democrat, predicted that a time would come when the peoples of Russia would "exchange like brothers the spiritual treasures of their nationality". In his times this could only be dreamed of. In our days it has become a reality.

#### **Mutual enrichment**

The establishment of a developed socialist economy in all the national republics considerably increased the contribution of each of them to the solution of statewide tasks. A single econom-

ic system took shape in the country. It develops on the basis of the rational division of labour, specialization and cooperation among the republics. The scientific and technical revolution has further strengthened them by turning science into a direct productive force of society. The economic progress of the countryside, the rise in the technical level of agricultural production are to be witnessed everywhere. All these are the results of the Leninist policy of the Party, enabling formerly backward nations and nationalities to attain a high level of development in industry, agriculture, and culture.

Formerly denied the most elementary advantages of culture, many of the Soviet peoples are now ahead of many highly-developed Western European countries in their educational level. For example, in Kirghizia, where before the revolution only a few dozen people had a secondary or higher education, there are 133 students per 10,000 of the population—more than in Italy or West Germany.

In the Soviet period the republic has put out more than 28,000 book titles in a total edition of nearly 200 million copies, including more than 14,000 titles in Kirghiz in an edition of over 122 million copies. Books by the Kirghiz writer, Academician Chinghiz Aitmatov, are read in 80 countries. Films, operas and ballets are based on his works.

This has become possible because all the peoples of the USSR came to the aid of those who had fallen behind in their development. Due to this, many republics, Kirghizia included, have accomplished a veritable leap in their cultural development from pre-capitalist backwardness to developed civilization.

If each Soviet people had to rely on its own forces alone, many would require centuries to reach



the present level; in reality, they have traversed this path in two or three decades.

The progress of many national cultures is connected not only with the artistic influence of Russian and other mature cultures but also with their representatives' direct participation in the process.

For example, when the first art school opened in the 1930s in Turkmenia, a country whose people did not even know what easel painting was, teachers came from Russia, the Ukraine and Armenia. But modern Turkmen easel painting cannot be called pseudo-Russian, pseudo-Ukrainian or pseudo-Armenian. Having become imbued with the ancient traditions of national graphic miniature, it has acquired a distinct Turkmen identity.

The first Uzbek operas are the result of the creative collaboration of Russian and Uzbek composers: *The Blizzard* was written by Vasilenko and Ashrafi and *Laila and Majnun*, by Glier and Sadykov. The assimilation of new musical forms was based on Uzbek traditions.

Today, Uzbek and Turkmen cultures themselves influence the painting, music and theatrical art of other peoples of the country. This is true of all the national cultures of the USSR and illustrates an objective process.

Characteristic of the present stage is the development of genres common to all the socialist national cultures. For example, long prose works are already being written in Kazakhstan, where prose as a literary genre had not existed at all. The Nivkhs, Yukagirs, Mansi, Chukchees, Nanais, Nentsi, Udegheis, Evenks, Uigurs and other national minorities are now writing novels and stories.

The process of mutual enrichment leads not only to the emergence of new genres, but also to



*A landmark event in Soviet film was Rezo Chkheidze's "The Father of a Soldier". Georgian actor Sergo Zakariadze (centre) created the memorable image of an old Georgian peasant who sets out from Kakhetia to visit his wounded son in a front-zone hospital and stays on to fight for victory together with his son.*

their improvement under the influence of other literatures.

These purely literary processes bear the imprint of the common way of life and common aspirations of the people characteristic of socialism.

The same picture is to be observed in the development of other forms of artistic culture—the theatre, the fine arts, cinematography and architecture.

The first half of the 1960s was marked by the premieres of the first Tajik children's opera, the Mari and Udmurt operas and the first national ballets of the Komi, Udmurts, Uigurs and other national minorities.

Professional theatres staging plays in 45 lan-

guages have been opened in national areas where they never existed before.

National schools have developed in Soviet cinematography. They are represented by outstanding film directors, such as the Lithuanian Vytautas Žalakevičius, the Georgians Tengiz Abuladze, Otar Ioseliani and Revaz Chkheidze, the Moldavian Emil Lotyanu, the Kirghiz Tolomush Okeyev and Bolot Shamshiyev, the Estonian Kalje Kiisk, the Tajik Bension Kimyagarov, the Kazakh Shaken Aimanov, and others.

National motifs are fruitfully used in the development of sculpture, small forms of architecture, mosaics, etc. Many architectural complexes built in the national republics are indicative of a painstaking selection of the most rational constructive and artistic methods.

In a word, every nation, large and small, is making its own distinct contribution to the common treasure-store of Soviet art. It follows from all this that Soviet culture is not a mechanical sum-total of isolated cultures, but a fusion of spiritual values created by all the Soviet peoples.

# In the name of peace and progress

## **International recognition**

Equality and respect for the national interests of all peoples and states, mutual understanding and friendship among them, are the major principles that also characterize the Soviet Union's activities in the sphere of international cultural contacts.

The Soviet government has always regarded exchange of artistic and intellectual values and mutual spiritual enrichment of peoples as an essential element of peaceful coexistence and international cooperation. It took the first steps in this direction in the years of the Civil War and foreign intervention.

In its decisions of that time it envisaged, in particular, a complex of measures to restore cultural and economic ties with other countries—the organization of book exchanges with foreign libraries, the invitation of foreign specialists and contacts between scientists and scientific institutions. But these initiatives were never realized. The bourgeois European countries, the United States and Japan were at one in their striving to isolate the workers'

and peasants' state and to prevent its normal development, and on no account to allow the spread of the ideas of the October Revolution, which were attractive to many peoples. They entertained hopes of restoring the old order destroyed by the revolution. There were only a few meetings between scientists and public and artistic figures from the West and those in the young Soviet Republic.

Of great importance for the establishment of international cultural ties between Soviet Russia and the rest of the world were Lenin's personal contacts and correspondence. He gave serious attention to such contacts, regarding them as important channels for the dissemination of truth about the proletarian state and for obtaining first-hand information about the state of affairs and public opinion abroad.

Lenin met and maintained correspondence with those whose revolutionary views were well known and who did not conceal their sympathy for the revolutionary transformations in Russia. Among them were the American journalists John Reed and Albert Rhys Williams, the Danish writer Martin Andersen Nexö and the French writer Paul Vaillant-Couturier. But the Chairman of the Council of People's Commissars also met and exchanged letters with world cultural figures whose views differed considerably from his. This did not prevent them from conducting lively conversations and debates with him. Lenin met the British writer H. G. Wells, the outstanding American scientist Charles Steinmetz, the well-known German conductor Oskar Fried, the British sculptor Clare Sheridan and others.

The victory of the workers and peasants of Russia in the Civil War and the complete failure of all attempts to restore the bourgeois-landowner sys-

tem in Russia with the help of arms, further toughened the isolationist policy of the ruling circles in the capitalist countries. Taking advantage of the absence in their countries of sufficient information about the revolutionary changes under way in the USSR, they incited hostility towards, and distrust in the world's first state of the working people. Each break through the cultural blockade was to dissipate the lies and slander of anti-Soviet propaganda.

The truth is hard to conceal. Progressive foreign scientists began to express admiration for the scientific achievements of their colleagues from Soviet Russia, whose discoveries in those years helped to determine major trends in the development of world science. Translations into European languages of works by Maxim Gorky, Vladimir Mayakovsky, Isaak Babel, Ilya Ehrenburg and other Soviet writers introduced the Western reader to a new hero, who had daringly set about refashioning the entire complex of human relations.

The names of the stage-directors Konstantin Stanislavsky, Vsevolod Meyerhold, Alexander Tairov and Yevgeni Vakhtangov symbolized for the contemporary world theatre the most progressive ways of portraying life on the stage.

The architectural projects of the Vesnin brothers, Konstantin Melnikov, Ivan Leonidov, Ivan Zholtovsky and others anticipated the projects of satellite towns and set innovatory examples to the solution of many problems of townbuilding.

Highly emotional and dynamic posters, expressive paintings, the search for new forms, plasticity and beauty in articles of everyday life brought world fame to Soviet painters and graphic artists.

The work of Dziga Vertov, who directed the first Soviet newsreels, opened up a new world of

imaginative journalism in film-making which greatly influenced the development of documentary cinema in the Soviet Union and other countries.

Already in the mid-twenties the young Soviet cinema received world recognition. Top prizes were awarded to Sergei Eisenstein, Dziga Vertov, Yakov Protazanov and other Soviet film directors at an international exhibition of decorative arts in Paris in 1925.

"The first international contact which we may call entirely successful," wrote Pyotr Lazarev, an outstanding physicist, "became the celebration of the anniversary of our Academy of Sciences attended by representatives of all academies of the world, and this fact must certainly become an exceptionally important event in the organization of international contacts."

The celebrations on the occasion of the 200th anniversary of the Academy of Sciences on September 5-14, 1925, were attended by 130 scientists from 21 countries. This event signalled the final collapse of the policy of cultural isolation of the Soviet Union. The extensive diplomatic recognition of the state of workers and peasants was followed by the recognition of the achievements of Soviet science and culture.

The establishment of diplomatic relations with the majority of leading capitalist countries in the middle of the 1920s spelled the end of the policy of blockade and isolation. Its senseless and dead-end character became obvious. And although there lay ahead other excommunications, threatening ultimatums and boycotts, the idea of peaceful coexistence of states with different social systems had begun to force its way.

The international recognition of Soviet culture was one of the indications of this.

## **Equality and cooperation**

With the end of the Second World War a new stage began in international cultural

contacts.

One of the main achievements in the postwar development of international relations is the recognition by many states of the principles of mutual respect, sovereignty, non-interference in the internal affairs of each other, equality, and mutual benefit. In the cultural sphere, these principles include mutual undertakings to promote contacts, exchanges of cultural and scientific achievements, tours by artistic companies, sports competitions and international tourism. These propositions were reflected in the Final Act of the Helsinki conference of 33 European countries, the United States and Canada in 1975.

In the 1960s and 1970s, the Soviet Union signed and ratified international conventions on the struggle against discrimination in the sphere of education, on international exchange of publications, on copyright, international covenants on economic, social, cultural, civil and political rights, etc.

International scientific cooperation rests today on treaties on the freedom of scientific research and the strictly peaceful utilization of scientific bases in Antarctica, on the principles of activities of states in the exploration of outer space, including the Moon and other celestial bodies, the agreement on the rescue of cosmonauts, etc.

Intergovernment agreements and protocols have become the principal form of regulating cultural and scientific cooperation. In the late 1950s the Soviet Union had long-term agreements in this field with about 20 countries. By 1965 the figure had risen to 54 and by the beginning of the 1970s, to 70.





*On August 1, 1975, in Helsinki, capital of Finland, the leaders of 33 European countries, the United States and Canada put their signatures to the Final Act of the Conference on Security and Cooperation in Europe, a document incorporating the principles of peaceful coexistence of states with different social systems, of their cooperation in different spheres. On photo: the Soviet delegation headed by Leonid Brezhnev at the conference in Helsinki.*

The decisions of the Helsinki Conference gave Soviet organizations and cultural workers an additional stimulus for further international cooperation.

A good illustration is provided by Soviet-French cultural contacts, which rely on the firm foundation of growing political, trade and economic cooperation. Over recent years guest performances in the Soviet Union have been given by the Comédie Française theatre, the ballet troupe of L'Opéra de Paris, French chamber orchestras and many variety-stage stars. The famous *Gioconda* from the Louvre, works by French impressionists and other pain-

tings have been exhibited. A very successful exhibition, "Moscow-Paris. 1900-1930", was held in the summer of 1981. In turn, tours in France were made by leading Soviet theatres and performing companies, including the Bolshoi Theatre, the Moscow Art Theatre, Sergei Obraztsov's puppet theatre, the Moiseyev Dancers and many others.

Since Helsinki the Soviet Union has signed dozens of cultural agreements and protocols, among them those with Belgium, Britain, Canada, the United States, Cyprus and other countries. In all, the Soviet Union has cultural agreements with 120 countries. Many Soviet cities have been visited by the London, New York and San Francisco symphony orchestras, by the Vienna Opera and the Danish Ballet, by La Scala of Milan, the Amsterdam philharmonic orchestra, the Stratford theatre

*Moscow is often the venue of international events in culture and the arts. On photo: American violinist Elmir Oliveira, who won the first prize at the 6th Tchaikovsky Competition (1978).*





of Canada, the Bavarian drama of Munich, the Shakespeare Royal Theatre of Britain, the Stuttgart ballet and other companies of world renown. Variety shows have been represented by the James Last orchestra of West Germany, the French singer Mireille Mathieu, the Roy Clark Country Show of the United States, the English singer Cliff Richard, the Boney M group and many others. All told, about 6,000 guest performances are given in Soviet cities every year.

Moscow has become a major international centre for cultural events. Universal popularity is enjoyed by the now traditional Tchaikovsky musical competition, the young ballet artists competition, the Moscow International Film Festival and the Moscow International Book Fair. The motto

*More than 200 book publishing and trading firms from 75 countries took part in the International Book Fair held in Moscow in 1979 under the motto "Books in the Service of Peace and Progress".*

of these forums is humanism, inspired by the desire to use the potential of culture and the arts to promote international friendship and mutual understanding.

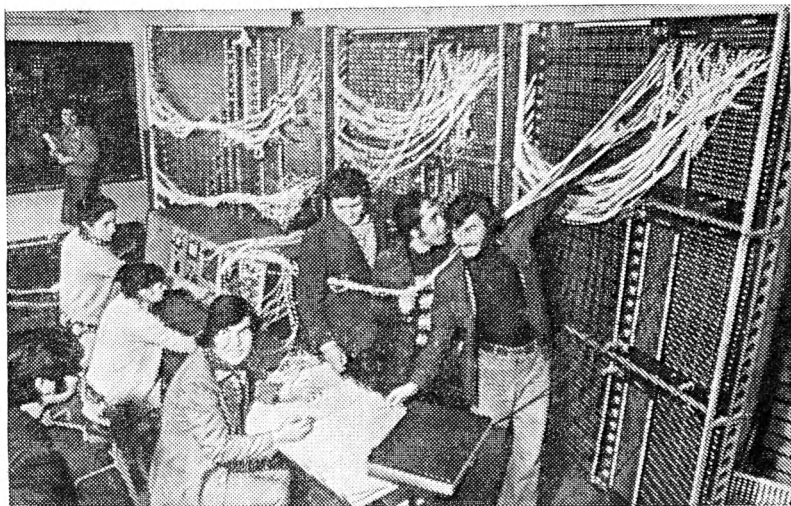
An important role is played by bilateral agreements on the exchange of students and post-graduates from higher schools and research institutions, the exchange of lecturers, specialists and scientific workers, agreements on cooperation in the sphere of health protection, tourism, etc.

Mention must be made here of reciprocity. The idea of reciprocity, of a conscientious attitude towards the accords that have been reached, permeates the Final Act. It is precisely this which some of our Western partners are lacking.

According to UNESCO statistics, the USSR publishes twice as much translated literature as the United States, Japan and France, and five times more than Britain. It is true that of late with the growing interest in life in the USSR, there has been an increase in the number of Western firms publishing Soviet literature. This takes place despite pressure from certain political circles not interested in detente.

The amount of Western material shown on Soviet TV exceeds three times the amount of Soviet material shown on Western TV, which certainly cannot be considered a normal situation. "Bridges of mutual understanding," Leonid Brezhnev noted, "are something that can only be built simultaneously from both sides."

One of the important results of the Soviet Union's international activities in the 10th five-year plan period, it was noted at the 26th CPSU Congress, is the noticeable extension of cooperation with countries which have freed themselves from the colonial yoke. The Soviet Union assists

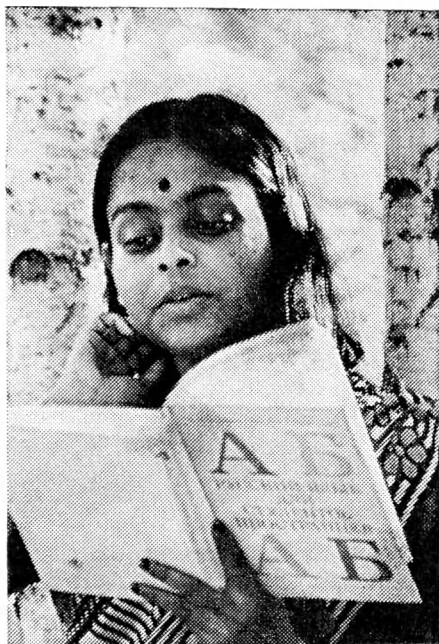


*The 1980s have seen a noticeable extension of the Soviet Union's cooperation with developing countries, especially in training specialists. Photo shows Syrian students at Tashkent University.*

them in establishing the material and technical basis of their culture. Higher schools, scientific centres, libraries, hospitals, etc., have been built in Asian and African states with its assistance. Specifically, Soviet scientists have helped linguists in Mali to create alphabets for local languages, Guinea and Morocco in reorganizing the educational system. The Soviet Union assists developing states in the study and utilization of natural resources. Soviet cultural workers help in the creation of national ballet schools, folk dance groups, national and symphony orchestras, national circuses, etc.

The Soviet Union contributes to the training of national specialists in all fields for developing countries. For example, in the 1980-81 academic year 300 Soviet universities and institutes had more than

*More than 6,000 students from 108 countries attend the Patrice Lumumba People's Friendship University in Moscow. For many of them the path to knowledge begins with a Russian ABC book.*

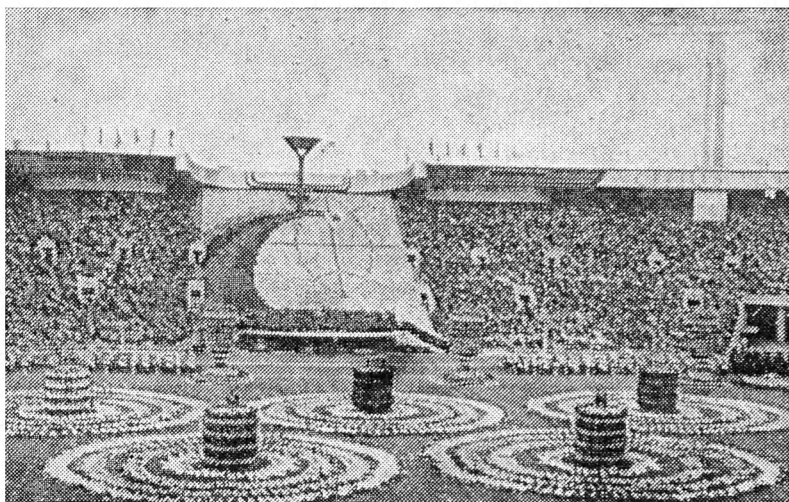


70,000 students from 145 countries, nearly half of them from developing Asian, African and Latin American states. They are learning 200 specialities.

A special place in the training of specialists from developing countries is taken by the Patrice Lumumba Peoples' Friendship University in Moscow, which marked its 20th anniversary last year. In these years 8,665 specialists have graduated from it, among them 6,600 from the developing world. At present it has 6,700 students from 108 Asian, African and Latin American countries.

In the last few years the Soviet Union and a number of developing countries have signed agreements on the mutual recognition of certificates of education and science degrees.

In addition to these intergovernment relations based on treaties direct contacts are maintained be-



*The opening ceremony of the 22nd Summer Olympics at Moscow's Central Stadium on July 19, 1980.*

tween public organizations, educational establishments and creative workers' associations. They conclude agreements on questions of cultural cooperation, such as the exchange of students and sports delegations and the invitation of specialists to read lectures and take part in joint research, on cooperation between scientific institutions, on exchanges of exhibitions, on film and art festivals, and so on.

The Helsinki Conference has been followed also by an increase in the exchange of films and radio and TV programs, although, as has been noted, not everything goes smoothly in this sphere, and not through the fault of the USSR. All the same, the USSR State Radio and Television Committee maintains contacts with more than 90 radio and TV companies abroad. The Soviet Union is a member of the International Radio and Television Organization and the international Intervision and Intersputnik organizations.



Sport plays a role of no small importance in the development of international cultural contacts. Soviet sports organizations have links with their counterparts in more than 100 countries.

The 22nd Summer Olympic Games in Moscow were a real holiday of youth, sport and friendship. Despite its boycott by the US Administration, nearly all leading world sports organizations took part.

Intourist, the Soviet shareholding organisation, one of the biggest in the world, which caters to foreign tourists and arranges tourist trips abroad for Soviet citizens, is a member of 12 international tourist firms. Every year it looks after up to three million foreigners and about two million Soviet citizens.

In the early sixties, passport, visa, customs and other check-point formalities were simplified to facilitate travel to the USSR.

Soviet representatives are active in the International Council of Museums, the International Association of Universities, the International Astronautical Federation, the Scientific Committee on Oceanic Research, the International Cartographic Association, the International Cell Research Organization and many other international bodies.

Since the mid-sixties Soviet scientists and cultural workers have taken part in major international undertakings such as the UN Conference on Science and Technology for Development, the International Program for the Study of the World Ocean, the International Program for the Study of Outer Space, the International Quiet Sun Year and numerous international congresses and conferences, film festivals, theatrical reviews, etc. Every year Soviet representatives take part in more than



500 international scientific and cultural undertakings and sports competitions.

Contacts have been widened between unions and associations of creative workers. Many films have been made jointly with colleagues in socialist, capitalist and developing countries. Soviet stage-directors have produced plays in many countries, and many plays have been staged in Soviet theatres by stage-directors from other countries.

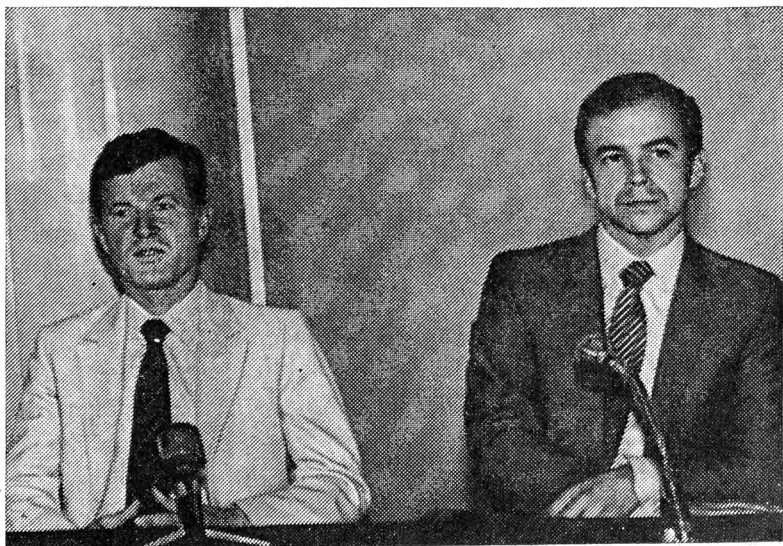
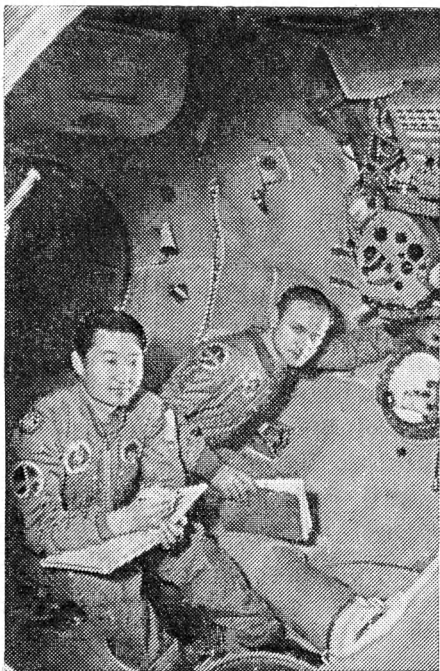
The Soviet Union's cultural ties are developing most fruitfully with the countries of the socialist community. It cooperates with them in the development of the most promising areas of modern science pooling the efforts of large teams for the solution of major problems. In 1956 the Soviet Union opened the Joint Nuclear Research Institute at Dubna, in which Soviet scientists and their colleagues from socialist countries have been probing the secrets of the atom and studying methods for the peaceful application of its energy.

Since the launching by the USSR of the world's first man-made earth satellite socialist countries have been cooperating in the exploration of outer space. *Sputnik-1* itself was launched within the framework of the International Geophysical Year and observations of it were conducted by radio stations and observatories in many countries.

Many states partner the Soviet Union in outer space research. In the late 1970s, in keeping with the *Interkosmos* program adopted in 1969 by socialist countries, space flights were jointly performed by Soviet cosmonauts and citizens of Czechoslovakia, Poland, the German Democratic Republic, Bulgaria, Hungary, Vietnam, Cuba, Mongolia and Romania. Representatives of France and India are also being trained for such flights.

*Fifteen years ago the member countries of the Council for Mutual Economic Assistance launched the Interkosmos program. Within its framework citizens of nine socialist countries performed space flights together with Soviet cosmonauts. On photo: Soviet cosmonaut Vladimir Dzhanibekov and Zh. Gurragcha, from Mongolia, training for their flight.*

*In 1981 French pilots Jean-Loup Chrétien (left) and Patrick Baudry arrived at the Soviet cosmonauts' training centre and began to prepare, together with colleagues from the USSR, for a joint Soviet-French space flight.*



The extension of Soviet cultural ties promotes various forms of cooperation and exchange of achievements in science and culture, and encourages joint creative activity of workers in science, literature and the arts. It strengthens peace, friendship and mutual understanding among peoples, promotes the development of national cultures and adds to the treasure-house of world culture.

A quarter of a century ago, at the height of the cold war, the prominent Soviet writer and public figure Ilya Ehrenburg remarked that in the days of superpowerful tanks and multiton bombs he did not for a minute lose faith in the power of the human word capable of damping the militarist psychosis. He meant not only the written word, but also the spoken word or words sung from the stage, or implicit in musical phrases. In short, he meant the arts. In our days, when the efforts of international reaction are aimed at reversing the course of history and checking the healthy process of detente to sow new poisonous seeds of hostility and suspicion among peoples, we believe in the tremendous power of the progressive humanistic arts.

\* \* \*

The window of the room in which we wrote this book looks onto a large school yard. At intervals it is filled with a noisy crowd of youngsters. The most boisterous of them are those who crossed the school's threshold only recently. In early autumn, timid and hushed, carrying huge bouquets of flowers, they were brought to school by their mothers and grandmothers. There is no recognizing them now.

Having opened their ABC books not more than half a year ago, they have already learned so much that it seems to them that their newly acquired

knowledge puts them on a par with all the rest. The older pupils look on them condescendingly. They know that the ABC is only the beginning, but one which is not only remembered all one's life, but in many respects determines one's life. From the primer begins the path to higher mathematics, to the summits of knowledge, to the mastering of the riches of world culture.



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